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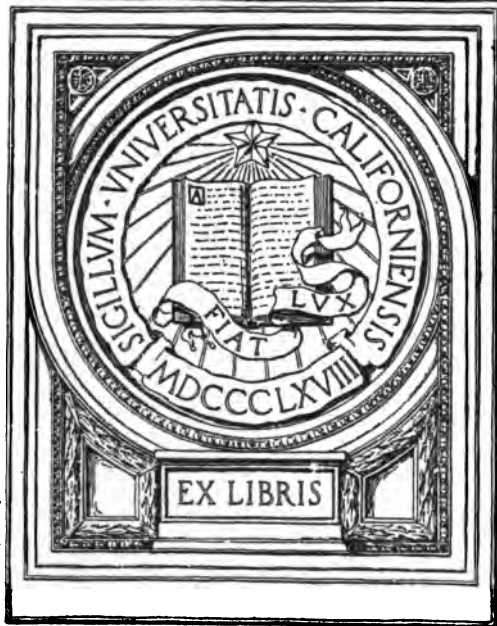
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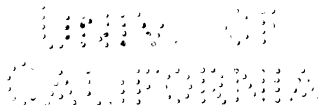
LUIS COLOMA, S. J.

BY

E. M. BROOKES



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THE FIRST MASS

I.

IN Andalusia during summer sudden thunder storms occur very frequently, but they last, in that clear, bright climate no longer than an expression of anger on the face of a child, who a moment afterwards will smile through his tears, for, in like manner, the sun bursts forth brilliantly on one side, while the heavy clouds are discharging torrents of rain on the other. 'The Andalusian peasants then say, that the devil is quarreling with his mother-in-law.'

One of these storms, which are none the less terrible for being short—for does not all in life that goes beyond the bounds of nature and reason enter into the domain of

passion?—burst upon the town of G—— on the night of the fifteenth of July, eve of the feast of Our Lady of Carmel, patroness of the hospital of the place.

The rain had put out the lights, and drenched the banners and Chinese lanterns that adorned the façade of the church in honor of the festival; but the tempest could not impose silence on the bells in the tower as they announced, not only the morrow's feast, but also the celebration of a First Mass.

At intervals, when the hurricane ceased for a few moments to rage and the thunder to roar, the bells might be distinctly heard as, despising the one and dominating the other, they went ringing on, like one inspired by truth and helped by reason, singing a joyful 'Alleluia' to all around.

The Carmel Hospital was situated in one of the steep, uneven streets of the upper part of the town; it turned its back, as though despising human greatness, upon an old castle that was once the dwelling of some Spanish grandee, and opened upon a square formed by houses inhabited by the

poor, and over the great doorway was inscribed in large characters;—"Open for the temporal health of the poor, and for the eternal welfare of the rich." Built close against its walls, like a swallow's nest, was a small whitewashed house, perfumed by a plant of mignonette that hung from the roof, and sanctified by a branch of blessed laurel that was tied to the balcony with blue ribbons. (This last ornamentation is very general in the South of Spain.) In this modest abode lived Don Blas the chaplain, with his sister Mariquita, and his nephew Pepito.

On the night to which we refer, the humble dwelling was bright and shining with that cleanliness and order produced by loving hands anxious to prepare a pleasant reception for some expected loved one. He who was expected that night was no other than Pepito himself, the dearly-loved nephew, who had grown up under the care of the two old people like a joyous rose-bush under the shadow of grave cypresses; the abandoned orphan, whom the charity of his uncle and aunt had received when an innocent child, formed into an irreproachable

youth, and at last become a model priest. Pepito (diminutive for Joseph,) as both the old folks called him, had just been ordained in Cadiz, and was coming to celebrate his First Mass in the Church of Our Lady of Carmel, of which his uncle was chaplain.

The latter was an ex-member of the Order of St. Francis, who had been turned out of his convent like many others, at the dispersion of the religious orders of men. He was one of those whom the world, with a certain mixture of pity and contempt, calls—good, simple souls,—(in Spanish they say, *almas de Dios*? God's souls) and who are in truth,—pure humble souls whom God accepts for His own.

For thirty years had he exercised his modest but difficult functions, with that charitable zeal, that constancy, which is the fulfilment of all virtue, that silent abnegation that so few understand, and which is the distinctive character of the learned, the holy, the calumniated Spanish Clergy.

Don Blas was not, however, a man of much learning; he knew no more Latin

than his missal, nor other prayers and offices than those of his Order, contained in his breviary; but what peace of mind! what tranquillity of conscience! what equanimity of temper that nothing could move; what a sense of well-being in his heart which, like that of his Father St. Francis, whom he invoked at all hours, burnt with that immense charity that finds consolation for every sorrow, remedy for every misfortune, and which, like the pelican, is capable of giving its own blood when it has nothing more to give! How sublime, and how attainable by all, was the philosophy of that poor old man, whose only knowledge was the love of God and his neighbor, and who epitomized the Religion whose minister he was in these two words—Our Father! And though there were some who laughed at the simple hearted priest, there were none who did not love and respect him; he possessed the humble superiority of virtue which gently penetrates and persuades without intrusion, unlike the haughty superiority of talent which proudly imposes its opinions and

ideas upon others, and, because it humbles them, excites their envy.

Don Blas had lived for several years alone, but one day there came to his door a poor woman carrying in her arms a baby, whose pretty face peeped out under its black hood, smiling as innocence does at the misfortune it does not understand. That woman was Doña Mariquita, the chaplain's sister, and the infant was the child of a younger sister of both, who had just died, and whose husband had disappeared. Don Blas opened his arms, his heart, and his slender purse to the sister and the child who sought his protection, and those two lives glided by under the shadow of his poor cassock; that of the sister with the gentle tranquillity of declining day; with the boisterous joy of daybreak, that of the child.

There existed nevertheless, in that humble dwelling, a strange mystery, that would at times paralyze the constant smile of Don Blas and silence the continual scolding of Doña Mariquita. The latter had received one morning a letter from Ceuta, addressed

to her former abode, but which after much delay and many wanderings had at last reached its destination. Both brother and sister had shut themselves up in the little study to read this letter, and there they stayed for two whole hours. Don Blas came out pale and anxious, and did not laugh again for a week; Doña Mariquita's eyes were red and swollen, and she forgot to scold for some days afterwards.

From that day, as Easter came round each year, Doña Mariquita made up in coarse cloth a few articles of men's clothing; then she would break open a little money-box in which she had by dint of many privations, saved a small sum, and with this she bought a few packets of cigarettes which she made into a parcel with the clothes. Don Blas would then get into the mail cart with the said parcel, and set out for Cadiz, his absence lasting from six to eight days.

No one ever knew, however, what was the motive of his journey nor whom he went to see.

"But where is uncle going? asked Pepito

of Doña Mariquita, with the natural curiosity of a child.

This aunt looked at him with an expression of unutterable love and tenderness, but she replied with her accustomed sharpness: "He's gone to count the friars, they say there's one missing!"

Once Pepito made the same enquiry of his uncle himself, when the good man turned upon him with a look of mingled horror, anguish and affection, and then answered with unusual severity: "A silly, curious child is both disliked and despised."

Pepito, ashamed and frightened hid his face in his aunt's skirts, and he never again ventured a question concerning that mysterious journey.

Doña Mariquita always looked out anxiously for her brother's return, going out into the road to receive him and questioning him by her looks.

"Nothing! nothing!" would answer Don Blas, with a disappointed air: "he is harder than a rock! . . . as the walls of Ceuta."

Doña Mariquita would begin to cry, and

for some days again, the one would cease his joyous laugh and the other her scolding.

And thus the years rolled on until the orphan boy grew into manhood, without however, losing his angelic innocence. Through the influence of his uncle he obtained a scholarship in the seminary at Cadiz, where he gave evidence of no ordinary talent, being most assiduous at his studies and exemplary in his conduct.

On a certain occasion, public discussions on theological subjects were held in the seminary by order of the bishop, and Pepito was chosen to defend the theses-de-Trinite. The joy of Don Blas at this news was unbounded, and he began without loss of time to prepare for his journey.

"But how are you going to get there?" said Doña Mariquita, in dismay. "There isn't a shilling in the house to pay for the gig."

Don Blas burst into one of his hearty fits of laughter, and exclaimed: "Why, how should a poor mendicant friar go except on his two legs—on the horse of his blessed

Father St. Francis, that requires neither oats nor bridle? . . .

"What on foot!" exclaimed Doña Mariquita. "On foot for four leagues, with seventy years on your shoulders! . . ."

"Four leagues! . . . Why, I'd go four millions of them on my knees to hear the child of my heart, who will become another St. Thomas of Aquinas, Mariquita!"—he added solemnly, waving in one hand his large, old fashioned hat, and in the other a brush with which he was trying in vain to smooth the beaver that was quite worn off; "Mariquita, remember what I say to you! . . . I shall never see the day, for the graveyard will soon claim me to fatten the crop of mallows; but you are still young (Mariquita was then sixty-five) and you may see it That boy of ours will one day win a mitre!"

"There must be at least five shillings in the money box," timidly observed Doña Mariquita.

"Hold your tongue, daughter, for goodness sake! That money is sacred."

Not for the chair of St. Peter would Don

Blas have exchanged the seat, with which the Rector of the Seminary honored him, on the same platform as the Lord Bishop. At one moment he was crying, at the next laughing; all the emotions which can agitate the human heart were depicted in turns upon that simple, kind face, while he turned with an air of complete satisfaction from side to side as though saying to all the assembly— "Have you not discovered that that young man is *my nephew*?"

When the declamation was over everybody surrounded the seminarist to congratulate him on his learning; the Bishop addressed him in the most flattering terms and placed in his hand a splendid copy of the 'Summa' of St. Thomas Aquinas.

Don Blas elbowed his way through the crowd, saying, "Make way, gentlemen, that is my nephew! My son, my son!" he cried, throwing his arms round the seminarist's neck. . . . "And my poor Mariquita that wasn't here to hear thee! But wait a bit till I can tell her all about it:" and the old man wept with joy like a child. All at once he grew serious however, for it had

crossed his mind that so much triumph might elate the humble youth, so he added, placing one hand on Pepito's head and the other on his own :

“Very good, my son! . . . thou hast spoken like a book! But keep in mind, ‘Pepito mio,’ that both thy head and this old crown of mine must become food for the worms! . . .”

And then he cried again, and directly after began to laugh and embraced his nephew anew.

Don Blas returned to his home in a carriage that the Rector of the Seminary obliged him to accept, taking with him two copies of the Latin theses which his nephew had defended. On the road he read them out to the driver, who naturally was no wiser than before.

He had scarcely entered the house when he gave one to Doña Mariquita, the other he had framed and placed over the chimney in his little study.

“If you had only heard him, Mariquita!” he exclaimed, while eating his supper of garlic soup ; “it is impossible to describe it

all,—such things must be seen and heard. By my blessed Father St. Francis! What learning and assurance! Our Pepito is scarcely twenty and he already knows by heart Saurez and St. Thomas. That boy ought to be kept like a relic! What eloquence, what ready answers, and what Latin, Mariquita, what Latin! . . . If I hadn't heard it myself I couldn't have believed it! . . .”

“But there isn't another like him!” said Doña Mariquita, with the tears in her eyes. When God created him, His Divine Majesty destroyed the mould so that there should be none to equal him in the world!”

“All the gentry of Cadiz was there ready to kiss his hands like one does a relic, and he as humble as my Father St. Francis, never lifting his eyes from the ground; bless him! He is an angel, Mariquita.”

“A saint, Blas!”

“Not quite, for when they raised objections to what he was saying, the lad was sharp enough in refuting them; it was no more to him than scaring flies! There was an old, lame fellow there as peppery as pos-

sible, who kept contradicting and denying everything.

"Denying and contradicting him!" exclaimed the old woman in amazement. "It must have been some rascal of a Jew!"

"Oh, no! it was a Canon. . . ."

"Well, he was jealous of our boy, no doubt."

"No, no, my dear! It was done in fun, as it were to see whether Pepito was firm in his stirrups."

"But of course my boy always had the best of him."

"To be sure he did! Who could ever upset him, with such keen judgment as he has, and with such clear truths as he was defending? . . . Mariquita, remember my words: as soon as he has sung his first Mass they'll make him parish priest."

"Oh, a Canon, at least!" answered Doña Mariquita.

Don Blas burst into one of his hearty fits of laughter.

"Well, at that rate you will make a bishop of him by Holy Week, and at Christmas a Cardinal or even Pope!" and the good na-

tured old man laughed again at his little joke.

"Ah! if his poor mother could lift up her head and see him now!" said Mariquita sadly.

The joyous laugh died away at once on her brother's lips. He raised his eyes to the ceiling with a loud sigh, then bowing his head exclaimed, "Poor, dear Anna of my heart! and recited an 'Our Father.'"

"Requiescat in pace," he added, as he finished.

"Amen!" answered Doña Mariquita, wiping her eyes with the corner of her apron.

No sooner had the latter reached the narrow closet where she slept, than she read from beginning to end, by the light of a tiny lamp, the six theses defended by her nephew.

"Not a word do I understand," she said; "but it must be something good since it is about the Blessed Trinity, and Pepito has composed it and the Bishop approved of it. . . ."

So the good old woman learned the whole by heart; and every night at the end of her

long list of prayers she recited it devoutly, adding, with that blessed faith of the poor in spirit to whom Christ has promised the Kingdom of heaven:—"For my boy Pepito! . . .that the Lord may send him health and good luck, and may deliver him from sin. . . ."

II.

PEPITO was expected to arrive from one moment to another, and the immense joy of the two old people manifested itself according to their different characters. Don Blas cried and laughed as was his wont, now walking up and down his modest little study, repeating the sermon he was to preach at his nephew's first Mass, then importuning Doña Mariquita with continual questions, prompted sometimes by the excess of his joy, at others by impatience, but always by his constant good temper and inalterable serenity of mind.

Doña Mariquita was bustling about in the kitchen in the midst of a very arsenal of saucepans and frying-pans, pipkins and pans, which contained the Baltasar's feast she was preparing for the morrow; and she was grumbling more than ever she did, for her scoldings always increased in proportion to her

activity and joy; they were like a rough, prickly covering which hid the beautiful sentiments of her sensitive soul, long suffering and sad like a passion-flower.

"Mariquita!" called out Don Blas for the hundredth time from his study.

"I'm here at your orders!" replied the former from the kitchen.

"I'll be bound that with such grand preparations for to-morrow's dinner you have forgotten to get any supper for Pepito to-night." "And I'll be bound the same thing will happen to you as happened to the overseer of Almagro;" answered Doña Mariquita in the same tone.

"Well, and what happened to him?"

"Why, from constantly meddling with what didn't concern him he died one day of vexation because his neighbor's stew got burnt."

Don Blas burst out laughing—"It wasn't for that woman," he observed, jokingly, "it was because the tailor made his waistcoat too short."

"Call it what you like, and don't keep interfering with other people's business."

"Well, well, I'll hold my tongue. . . . Don't put yourself out, for goodness sake! I only mentioned it for fear the boy should be hungry."

"Let him gnaw his elbows—bite his nails—then Ave Maria Purissima! (A favorite exclamation with the Spaniards.) One would think you had been nursed on wasps' milk. . . ."

"And you on meddler's syrup!"

Don Blas was silenced as usual, and Doña Mariquita went on singeing a fowl she had plucked.

"Mariquita!" called Don Blas once more, but rather timidly.

"What, again!" grumbled the old woman, as she struggled with elbows wide apart to truss the refractory fowl.

"Pepito is very fond of stewed rabbit and potatoes. . . ."

"And I like potatoes with stewed rabbit."

"I just mentioned it because he'll have to stay so long fasting to-morrow . . . and that is a dish that can be cooked quickly. . . ."

"Anything more, I wonder! what a fuss the man is making about the boy's supper, to be sure! Don't worry yourself, we won't let him go to bed hungry. . . ."

"All right, my dear soul! Just forget that I said anything about the matter. . . ."

But a little while afterwards Don Blas came into the kitchen with the notes of his sermon in his hand.

"Do you know what I have been thinking of?" he said. "As Pepito will come home very tired you might put my wool mattress on his bed; I can do very well with the palliasse."

"Do you know what has just occurred to me?" answered Doña Mariquita impatiently. "With so much chattering you'll bring the belfry down on your head, and we shall have no sermon to-morrow. So just let me alone, for no one is going to pay any attention to you! . . ."

She took good care not to add that her own wool mattress was already placed in Pepito's bed and that consequently she would have to sleep on the bare boards.

The chaplain went back to his study crestfallen, and murmuring.

"Why ever did they christen her 'Maria de la Paz?' peaceful indeed! it ought to have been 'Mariquita de la Guerra;' there's more of war than peace in her!"

"And why didn't they call that man Don Posma instead of Don Blas!" replied the old woman sharply, beginning the difficult and intricate task of stuffing a chicken.

Ten minutes had hardly elapsed when her brother again appeared in the kitchen.

"Mariquita!" he said in trembling tones.

"What in the world do you want with my name to-night?" exclaimed the latter more impatient than ever.

"Mariquita, listen to me, for heaven's sake!" continued the chaplain in anguish; "I have just had an inspiration which no doubt comes from heaven. . . . God and my blessed Father St. Francis must have sent it me. . . ."

Dofia Mariquita raised her head in astonishment; and seeing the agitation of her brother, she approached him with her hands

full of stuffing, and with uplifted eyebrows and open mouth.

"A minute ago," continued Don Blas, "I was standing there before the picture of my blessed Father when it came into my head all at once, without knowing why, that if Pepito were to ask to-morrow in his first Mass what you and I have been asking in vain for the last eighteen years, the Lord would surely grant it him. . . . Yes; surely, for His Divine Majesty never refuses the grace or the favor which a new priest asks in his first Mass. . . . That is certain, certain, certain. . . . The Father Superior of my convent told me so. . . ."

"And whoever could have the courage to stab him to the heart in that way?" exclaimed Doña Mariquita in terror.

"I will tell him to offer his Mass for my intention, which will be that of course, and there is no need of more."

"And if he should suspect anything? . . . Ah! Maria Santissima, Blas! it would be killing him!"

"God will help me, woman! . . . My Father St. Francis will guide me. . . ."

Dofia Mariquita was going to reply, but the joyous sound of a horse's bells and carriage wheels reached her ears, and in a moment the two old folks ran to the doorsteps crying:

"Here he is at last! son of my soul—child of my heart—(*hijo de mi alma*)!"

A young priest was already hurrying up and opened his arms to both, pressing the two white heads to his heart, the three shedding tears of joy. Don Blas was the first to fall at the feet of the new-comer.

"On your knees, Mariquita, on your knees!" he cried.

"My son, my son, thy blessing. . . thy first blessing for thy poor old uncle and aunt! . . ."

And the anointed hands of the newly ordained priest were raised for the first time to heaven, to draw down upon those two venerable heads the blessing of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost.

Pepito then took out of his pocket a white ribbon cut in two pieces and carefully wrapped in paper.

"Here is the ribbon with which my hands

were tied at my ordination," he said, presenting it to Don Blas: "one half is for you and the other for my aunt."

"The Lord reward you, my son, the Lord reward you! I'll keep it as a relic as long as I live, and when I'm dead they shall tie my hands with it."

Dofia Mariquita had taken her piece, and with many tears kissed it, but without saying a word.

Two hours later Don Blas came out of his nephew's room and went on tiptoe to that of his sister. The latter was waiting for him at the door.

"What did he say?" she enquired anxiously.

"That he would do as I asked."

"And he suspects nothing? . . ."

"Nothing. . . . The dear, innocent boy is sure that his parents are dead. . . . Son of my heart, gentle dove born of a cruel wolf! My heart was breaking as I listened to him, Mariquita. . . . He told me that he had intended offering his first Mass for the repose of the souls of his parents. . . . His parents . . . that saint his mother,

has already received the palm of martyrdom in heaven. . . . but he . . . her executioner . . . if he resists the grace of his son's first Mass, he is certain to die impenitent, certain ! . . ."

III.

THE day of the feast dawned at last, clear and beautiful, as though the night, enveloped in her black mantle—night, which hides so many miseries, so many fears, so many crimes—had carried off under its dark folds the terrible storm of the preceding evening. There then drew up to the pier of the town an open boat, much damaged by the storm, which had gone astray on its way from Ceuta to Lisbon. The crew landed with the intention of visiting the first sanctuary of Our Lady they should meet with; for they had made the vow to the heavenly Patroness of mariners in those moments of terrible danger, which rekindle faith by the light of hope. An old man was among the crew, who had not the appearance of a sailor; his head was tied up in a red handkerchief, over which was a rabbit-skin cap, adding to his grim counte-

nance a still more repulsive look. He wore a rough, warm jacket and trousers of coarse cloth with yellow stripes, and in his gait was observable the peculiar limp which marks, as with a terrible countersign, those unfortunate beings who have long worn shackles (or fetters). He seemed exceedingly tired, and among his dishevelled hair and gray beard, fresh clots of blood were distinctly visible.

The group of sailors, led by a crowd of boys who had gathered round the extraordinary spectacle, soon reached the Church of Our Lady of Carmel, which was the nearest to the wharf. Don Blas was just coming down from the pulpit after preaching his sermon, broken by many tears and sighs, which had found an echo more than once in the numerous audience who listened to him.

Dofia Mariquita was there in the front row, dressed in a black silk gown that was only worn on Holy Thursday and Easter Sunday, and a lace mantilla with foundation of satin and velvet, which never left the depths of her trunk but on those two days.

The celebrant had turned to the altar after

intoning the Credo ; he was assisted on one side by his uncle, and on the other by the curate. All else however, had vanished from the vision of the new priest ; he felt the moment drawing near when his Divine Saviour was coming for the first time into his hands, and he was seized with that holy dread and awe which make the very cherubim veil their faces with their wings.

He bent his head over the altar stone which encloses the relics of the martyrs—teaching him to give his life for the faith—praying for the Church which is its guardian, for the Pope her head, and for the King who should be her defender. Then joining his hands and closing his eyes he remained for some moments motionless : the new priest was about to beg for the grace of his first Mass. . . . The moment had arrived, to present before the divine mercy-seat that mysterious petition, that had been the object of the supplications of the aged couple for eighteen years. Don Blas bowed his head and crossed his hands, and Doña Mariquita hid her face in hers : both of them almost held their breath, as though

fearing to intercept the flight of that prayer from which they hoped such great things.

The celebrant at last unclasped his hands, and continued those beautiful prayers, by which the Church, in her supplications, seems to extend a mantle of love and pity over all her children, both living and dead. A confused noise was heard for a moment at the bottom of the Church: the crew of the half-wrecked boat were kneeling there, and the old man in the patched jacket had given a loud groan, as lifting his hands to his head he had fallen senseless to the ground. Four of his companions immediately raised him up, and guided by some men of the town, they carried him to the hospital without even arousing the attention of the greater part of the congregation.

The Mass was followed by the kissing of hands, after which the young priest made his thanksgiving; then came the congratulations; and two hours later Don Blas was sitting at his modest table, having his nephew on his left and the curate on his right, the other places being occupied by the director of the hospital and three more ecclesiastics.

Doña Mariquita, assisted by a poor widow—a recipient of her charity—prepared the dishes in the kitchen and served them herself at the table, for had she not exhausted therein all her culinary knowledge and her scanty savings. Don Blas, merry and jocose as ever, kept up the good humors of his guests, and fancied he did the honors of his table very meanly unless he risked giving them an indigestion by repeatedly importuning them to partake twice of every dish. The time for dessert had arrived, and Doña Mariquita placed in the centre of the table, with an air of indescribable satisfaction, the present made to the new priest by the Superioress of the hospital. It was a white lamb, nearly as large as life, made of almond paste ; its head was resting on a little mound of sugared almonds, the eyes, snout, hoofs, and the tip of the tail were dyed with chocolate, and it inclosed in its sweet intestines a quantity of preserved fruit ; the fore feet sustained a chalice made of barley-sugar, and in the midst of clouds of whipped cream rose an imitation of the sacred host in sugar, and crowning all, there was a little red satin

banner embroidered with this inscription in spangles: *Ecce Agnus Dei: ecce qui tollit peccata mundi.*

Every one laughed gaily at the Superior-ess's allegory; the curate took down the banner and gave it to the young priest, proposing a toast in honor of the good religious.

All of a sudden, one of the hospital servants came hurriedly in, in search of the chaplain and to inform him that a poor dying man was asking for a confessor. Don Blas rose, laying his half empty glass on the table, with that haste, that holy eagerness with which the zealous priest leaves all that concerns himself to go after the souls belonging to Christ. His nephew however, detained him.

"Let me go, uncle," he said. "The Lord Bishop has already given me the faculty, so I can confess him. Let me begin to-day to pay back something at least of the much that I owe you."

Don Blas seemed to hesitate for a moment, but the curate urged him also to remain, so the good old man sat down again,

exclaiming in tones that brought tears to the eyes of all present:

“Go my son! . . . Go, and learn henceforth to be the slave of the souls redeemed by Jesus Christ. . . .”

The young priest reached the hospital by a passage that communicated with the chaplain's house. Stretched on a straw bed in one of the lower rooms was the old man who had fainted in the church; he had a large wound in his head, caused by a blow from a broken crossbow during the storm, a splinter of which had remained fixed in the wound; the second blow he had received on falling exhausted with fatigue in the church, had driven the splinter almost into the brain, and the doctor on extracting it had declared that whether he came to his senses or not he had but a few hours to live. The wounded man had at last recovered speech and his first words were to ask for a confessor. The priest held back for a moment, awestruck at that horrible sight, and a nervous shudder ran through his whole body. The gentle, timid youth had never seen flowing blood; neither had he yet sounded

the deep folds of a human conscience; for the first time he beheld a death wound welling forth fresh blood; and for the first time, too, he saw reflected in those gloomy, troubled eyes those other wounds of the soul cancered by remorse. The dying man kept looking anxiously towards the door, and no sooner did he perceive the priest than he murmured in a hoarse and broken voice, rendered almost inaudible by the death-rattle, and which the anguish of a sinful conscience made the more fearful;

“Father! . . . “My sins are enormous!” “The mercy of God is infinite, my brother!” exclaimed the young priest, in a tone that came from the depths of his soul. The contrite tears began to flow freely from the eyes of the dying man while with his failing strength he strove in vain to strike his breast. The priest leant over him speaking words of hope and comfort; and passing his arm under his back, raised him almost in a sitting posture: that dishevelled and blood-stained head which looked as if it had escaped from the gibbet, then fell upon the breast of the priest, the

living temple of Christ. For a whole hour did that confession last, frequently interrupted by sobs, at times rendered unintelligible by the death-rattle, but the sincerity of which was manifested by those abundant tears of repentance. The priest raised at length his right hand, and without ceasing to support the wounded man with his left, he pronounced for the first time the sacred words of absolution that wipes out sin from the soul. The dying man then gave a loud sigh of relief and remained for some minutes motionless, all at once he became agitated, murmured some unintelligible words, opened his eyes and mouth horribly wide, and with a violent jerk his head fell forward, leaving on the cassock and white collar of the priest a deep stain of blood.

The youth understood that he was dead and let him fall gently on that poor couch; he afterwards closed those eyes that could see no longer, and kneeling at the head of the bed prayed for a long time. At last he rose and went towards the door, but obeying an instinctive impulse of his heart that he could not explain to himself, he turned

back, and taking up the dirty, horny hands of the corpse he kissed them first and then crossed them on the breast.

When he came out it was already night; a Sister of Charity was waiting for him at the door.

"How is the wounded man?" she asked.

"He has died in the holiest dispositions," replied the priest.

"Blessed be God!" returned the Sister; and giving him a folded paper she added: "Please have the kindness to give this paper to Don Blas . . . It is the unfortunate man's passport, the only document he brought with him, and in it the chaplain will find his name to insert in the register . . . He entered the hospital to-day at eleven o'clock, and he will be buried to-morrow morning."

The young man took the paper without looking at it and returned to the house, profoundly moved by the scene he had witnessed, going at once to his uncle's study. The latter was seated at his desk, reciting matins for the following day; and his nephew to avoid disturbing him, for he knew

how much he disliked being interrupted in his office, gave him the Sister's message very briefly, adding however, that the wounded man had died perfectly contrite, and went out of the room leaving the folded paper on the table.

"Very good, my son, very good. . . . The Lord has granted thee beautiful first fruits . . ." had been the old man's only comment.

Don Blas continued his office leisurely, and as he finished it, closed his enormous leather-bound breviary; then he took up the register which, as the hospital was small and but little frequented he kept himself, and opened it in order to write therein the name of the deceased. Unfolding the grimy document he approached the lamp to read it.

"Virgen Santissima!" he exclaimed, letting it fall in terror and lifting both hands to his head.

For a long while he remained motionless, with bleached lips and eyes almost starting out of their sockets, murmuring in accents so low as to be hardly audible:

“Mother of Mercy! . . . My blessed Father St. Francis! . . .”

At last he took up the dirty paper, worn and torn by the repeated foldings, and read over and over again the few short lines it contained. It was an ordinary passport issued in favor of one José Luis Lopez of Garcia, by an extraordinary amnesty, free on ticket of leave from the prison of Ceuta.

Don Blas got up and went tottering to the door, turning the key in the lock; then he sat down again and remained more than an hour without moving, his gaze riveted on that name that had shaken every fibre that could vibrate in the old man's heart. For the said José Luis Lopez was the father of Pepito; the vicious wretch who had murdered his wife and abandoned his child, to go away with a scandalous woman; the criminal who, brought at last to justice, had been condemned to penal servitude for life in the prison of Ceuta; the enemy whom the heroic old priest had visited every year, in order to bring him the little temporal comforts which the shameless gambler readily ac-

cepted, and to offer that spiritual succor which the hardened criminal had ever refused. . . . This was the sinner for whose conversion the aged brother and sister had constantly prayed during eighteen years; here was the secret which they had hidden in their bosoms, like a burning coal that tormented them, but which they had never allowed to escape, in order to save the honor of the innocent son. . . .

And now the old man recognizes the hand of Providence suddenly unravelling all difficulties and granting their petitions. An unexpected pardon had opened for the criminal the doors of that prison, which was to have been his tomb; a storm at sea had cast him upon that shore; a providential wound had brought him to the gates of death, and by a supreme touch of divine grace he had at last deposited his sins in the bosom of his own son, and received absolution from those immaculate hands!

Don Blas trembled from head to foot. . . . The innocent son had never dreamt that the murderer for whom he had opened the gates

of heaven was his own father, and he, Don Blas, the guardian angel of his honor, held there the only proof of the fatal secret ; yes, there it was in his hands, and in one moment he could make it disappear forever.

The old man did not hesitate : he closed the hospital register violently without having inserted the name of José Luis Lopez, and put it back into its place.

“ The grace of his first Mass ! The intercession of my blessed Father St. Francis ! ” he kept murmuring.

Then he took the document and burnt it at the flame of the lamp and blew away the ashes with a breath. As he did this, the feverish strength which had upheld him vanished, and the feeble old man sank upon his knees exclaiming in accents weak and low:—

“ *Nunc dimittis servum tuum, Domine !* ”

The soul of the criminal father was saved, and the honor of the innocent son was assured—(secured).

The grace of his first Mass had been granted.

TIO PELLEJO; OR PERFECT RESIGNATION.

I.

IN the present day in all the cultivated nations of Europe, much time and research are devoted to the collection of popular songs and traditions, as a means of ascertaining the distinguishing characteristics of each race and nation.

This study, as yet but little cultivated in Spain, has proved nevertheless, that her people have great religious and poetic instinct, and their deeply rooted faith has inspired Creations, alike beautiful and pregnant with meaning, which adorn their belief without in any degree diminishing the ingrtiety of dogma.

The following story is one of those tales of simple devotion which spring from the heart of that true poet—a people inspired by the spirit of religion. It was related to me by one of nature's poets. His true name was Cristobal, but he was popularly styled—"Tio Pellejo," or "Daddy Skinny-bones," and his occupation was that of a retail smuggler throughout the region that extends from Gibraltar to the mountains of Ronda.

Many years ago I was crossing that picturesque part of lower Andalusia, which is not the Andalusia seen by the traveller who is rapidly hurried along by a locomotive, without encountering more than,—first immense rocks, secondly olive-yards, then vineyards, later on, salt lagoons, and lastly the sea, which gently kisses the rock on which like a white seagull, is built the City of Cadiz. That part of Andalusia that stretches from Gibraltar into the mountains of Ronda is the Andalusia of rugged ranges of hills covered with verdant shrubs; of fertile fields; of shady forests of oak festooned with ivy; of endless pastures where

herds of wild bulls are reared ; of Moorish castles falling into ruin—the perishing works of man—standing upon inaccessible rocks which—the immutable works of God—resist the wear of ages. An exquisitely varied whole, in which the beauties of cultivated nature alternate with the bold majesty of the rocks, the woods and the torrents, and of whose loveliness, only those who like ourselves have repeatedly contemplated it in the course of our journeys on horseback, can form an adequate idea.

In one of these excursions, which were the delight of our youthful years, we took as guide Tio Pellejo. We were journeying one November night, in the direction of Algar, a village in the mountains ; I sheltering myself as best I could in the folds of my Spanish cloak, and Tio Pellejo with no other defence than his well worn and well patched jacket and the weight of his seventy years.

“What o’ clock is it?” I asked suddenly, finding it impossible to get at my watch.

Tio Pellejo looked up slowly at the stars and replied without hesitation : “A quarter-past one.”

"It seems to me that your watch has stopped," I said jokingly.

"Well, the Lord, who winds it up, never sleeps," gravely answered the old man.

"But don't you see, it was twelve when we left the farm of Mimbrial and we must have been at least three hours on the road."

"Yes, and the day on which you have had nothing to eat, seems forty-eight hours long," replied Tio Pellejo. "At twelve we started and now it is a quarter-past one precisely. Don't you see the three sisters up there," he continued, pointing out to me the three stars which form the belt of Orion. "Well, when they set at this season over the Tempul Rock the clock is on the stroke of one, not a minute more or less. Half an hour afterwards, half of the 'Virgin's Tears' fall towards the mountain of San Cristobal.

... See, your Honor, how they are already falling!" Saying this, he indicated with his finger the 'Milky Way,' which was really beginning to disappear behind the said mountain.

"But why do you call these stars 'Our

Lady's tears?' " I asked, wishing to know the meaning of all this.

"Why, for the same reason as bread is called bread and wine is called wine," he simply answered. "That crowd of little stars is formed of the tears that Holy Mary shed during her sojourn in this world; the angels gathered them up, and God placed them in the sky. . . . That is why they are so many and so beautiful!"

On hearing Tio Pellejo give, with even greater assurance than Laplace, the explanation of the formation of the famous nebulæ, we were reminded of the fable in Greek mythology, immortalized by Rubens and praised by critics and poets.

How much more poetic and beautiful did the old peasant's version seem to us! which if it had never had a Rubens to illustrate, or a poet to sing its praises, must, nevertheless, have moved more than one heart which loves to contemplate in Mary the Mother of Sinners and the Comfort of the Afflicted!

Because it thus moved us we continued to question the old pedler.

"Whoever told you all that, Tio Pellejo?"

"Why, I knew that before I was born. It is like weeping, that everybody knows how to do without learning. Nobody ever taught it to me; but once, your honor, my wife, who is now in glory, reminded me of it almost in this very place—a little to the left on the road to Algeciras. . . . Great God! Twelve years have passed, and I still hear her voice in my ears! . . . I had three sons; the conscription claimed all three, and they were forced to go and fight the Moors in Africa. My poor Chana (diminutive for Sebastiana) had no more tears left to weep, and her face seemed to grow thinner and thinner. I hid my sorrow, but I felt something within me that gave me no rest, and I became sullen and morose, not caring even for my home. One evening I saw a neighbor coming towards our house, and descrying me with Chana, he gave a whistle to call me to him. That whistle sounded sadder to me than the trumpets of Holy Week. I flew towards him, for my heart had not deceived me. His son had re-

turned on leave from Africa, and through him I learnt that of my three children the eldest had been killed at the taking of Sierra-Bullonet, the second had been murdered in a trench by a treacherous Moor, and the third, Sebastian, a fine strapping fellow as ever you saw, was in the hospital at Algeciras, with cholera morbus. . . . I went back to Chana and told her the news. . . . The poor soul bent down as if she saw the great tower of Tempul going to fall upon her; her eyes seemed starting out of her head, and she became as pale as a ghost.

“Let us go to Algeciras, Cristobal,” she said.

I got ready the donkey and we set off on on the road to San Roque so as to take a short cut to Algeciras. Night came upon us a little beyond Martelilla. Chana rode the donkey, and muffled up in her shawl, kept on reciting Cremos and Salves (the Spanish have a great love for the ‘Salve Regina’). I followed behind muttering curses in a low tone. I was not such a bad man; I believed in God and in the Holy Virgin, and in all

that one ought to believe, but this terrible blow had filled my soul with bitterness and rebellion.

All at once the donkey stumbled and broke the saddle strap, and I, roused from my angry communings, broke forth into violent imprecations. I was blinded by passion and I uttered a blasphemous oath. Chana jumped down off the donkey as though she had heard the trumpet of the Last Judgment, and placed herself before me stiffer than a corpse.

"Hold your tongue, Cristobal! . . . Hold that wicked tongue of yours," she cried. "Well you deserve that God should kill your last son too?"

"And why does God treat us so cruelly?" I exclaimed, more furious than ever.

"Because we are sinners!" she replied, with the tone of a judge passing sentence of death. Look there," she added, pointing to that group of stars, "look at the tears we cost most Holy Mary! Count them if you can! She shed them because of us, and yet we go on offending her Divine Son! . . ."

"I don't know what came over me then, but my heart seemed to come into my mouth, and I kept lagging behind so as to be alone. I looked at those blessed stars in the heavens, and the tears fell from my eyes like rain. "Most Holy Mary, who didst weep because of me," I sobbed aloud, . . . I did not know what I was saying! Mother of poor sinners, protect this lost sheep. Mother of mercy, cover me with thy mantle. Oh, Mother! who didst love thy Son, have pity on one who has lost three at one blow!"

We got to Algeciras in the morning and went straight to the hospital. We asked the porter for Sebastian Perez, and he took us in to the Registry Office. There was a sergeant there who looked out the name in a book.

"Sebastian Perez," he said, "entered on the twenty-fifth of May. . . . Left on the first of June. . . ."

"And where did he go to?" quickly enquired Chana.

"Why, to God's Acre (Campo Santo) with his feet foremost," answered the Sergeant.

I felt my poor Chana's nail's almost enter my flesh as she clutched my arm, trembling like a leaf.

"Let us go to the churchyard," she said. And to the churchyard we went; but it was shut, and the gatekeeper would not open it for us. Chana sat down on the threshold, and through the bars of the gate looked from afar at the earth that covered the body of her son.

We had a couple of pesetas, and Chana went and begged for a Mass in honor of the Mother of Sorrows, for the repose of the soul of our boy, I slipped into the sacristy in search of a priest, and with tears of grief and contrition confessed my many sins. Returning homewards after this we journeyed seven hours without uttering a word. At nightfall even my breath seemed to be failing me, and I sunk down beside an old well. Chana got off the donkey and sat at my side. I was the first to speak.

"And what shall we do now, Chana," I said.

Chana raised her head. "What the 'Our

Father' says, Cristobal. . . . 'Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.'"

"I began to cry like a baby ; for though I was a man that could stop a yoke of oxen with one hand, I had not the fortitude of that holy woman, who was not a mere woman of flesh and blood, your honor, but an Angel of Heaven !"

"Cristobal," she said to me in a voice that seemed to come from another world, "there was once a man, poor like ourselves, whose name was John. He had a wife and daughter, and he tilled a little plot of land to support them. At that time the locust fly was devastating the country side, and John saw with terror his own bit of land threatened in its turn. He went straight to the Crucifix of the Mimbral, and prostrate before the holy image, he besought help from the Lord who ripens the produce of the earth. "O Lord!" he cried, with uplifted hands, "guard my crops and misery will fly from my heart! Preserve my sheaves of corn and bread shall not fail in the house of thy servant !"

"Nevertheless, the Lord did not grant the

prayer of poor John. He lost his crop, and poverty knocked at his door."

"What is to be, must be!" said he to his wife. The Lord has left us our health and strong arms; He will bless our labor."

"But shortly after that his wife fell ill and soon was at death's door. John ran off again to ask of the Lord, who gives life, and takes it back again when He wills, health for his wife. Throwing himself before the blessed image, he prayed, "O, Lord, I beseech Thee save her life! Do not leave my child without a mother! Give her back that health which is the sunshine of the poor man's home!"

"Not even this time did the Lord harken to his supplications; John's wife died three days afterwards, leaving her husband alone with his orphan daughter."

"What is to be, must be!" exclaimed John. "He has taken my wife, but he has mercifully left me my child."

"It was not long however, before the little girl sickened with the same disease as her mother. John flew once more to his beloved Crucifix. "O Lord," he cried, "save

my child! I am old and infirm. . . . What shall I do all alone, like a tree stripped of its branches and its fruit?"

"He returned to his home with renewed hope; but alas! on approaching the bedside of his daughter he found her motionless. He placed his hand on her heart, but it was still. . . . In silent grief he went out and begged a white shroud to wrap her in; with the boards of the bedstead he made her a coffin, and with his own hands he buried her at the feet of her mother."

"I have lost my crops! I have lost my wife! I have lost my daughter!" sighed John, as he walked back to his solitary home. "The Lord does not want me to ask him for anything. Nothing will I ask!"

But every day he went to the little chapel, and humbly kneeling before the holy Crucifix, bowed his head submissively. He no longer made any petitions; he uttered not a word of supplication. All that this model christian repeated was: "Lord, here is John! . . . *Señor aquí está Juan!*". . . .

"At last he too died, and his blessed soul arrived at the gates of heaven; there he .

knelled, to recite for the last time his daily prayer, "Lord, behold, here is Thy servant John!" And the gates of heaven flew open wide to let him in."

Tio Pellejo having thus concluded his narration, remained silent. The darkness prevented my seeing whether he was weeping.

At length, wishing to distract him from his sad memories, I asked: "And what became of Chana?"

"Well, it happened to Chana as it happened to an old worn out horse, your honor," he answered. "From that time she never lifted her head. Her heart and courage did not fail her, but her body seemed to be sinking into the grave; and three months later she was in eternity with her sons.

"I was left alone, your honor; alone! I left off the smuggling, for it is said that there is only one step between being a smuggler and a thief, and I dare say that is pretty true. I work when I can get anything to do, and when I can't they never deny me

a bit of bread in any of the farms. I accompany the gentlemen when they come to hunt the wild boar in these mountains, and whenever I pass the great Crucifix of Mimbral, I go up to the little chapel, and I say as John did: 'Lord, here is Thy servant!' Here is Thy servant Tio Pellejo! He is already seventy! . . . Lord, don't forget him!

Such were the poor in the Spain of by-gone days! The story of John, as we said before, is a beautiful ascetical legend, which proves in what degree of perfection its author, the poor of Spain, understood the difficult virtue of resignation. The example of Chana and Tio Pellejo is an absolute fact, and proves with what fidelity they practice that virtue which in their hearts they so perfectly appreciated.

To-day all this has disappeared; this same Tio Pellejo was, at the time we knew him, but a rare remnant of the ancient type of Spaniard, which has ceased to exist in order to give place to the people formed by Socialism and the "Mano Negra."

What has come over Spain, "*Dies meo*?" What blighting wind has torn from this unfortunate people its firmly rooted faith and its simple beliefs? True it is, that an impious revolution has swept over the land. Certain too, that the myrmidons of Socialism have striven to uproot from the hearts of the poor—in order to sow therein the germs of rebellion and discontent—that cheerful content and submission which knew how to repeat, "Thy will be done"! that blessed absence of all ambition which only asks for its "daily bread"; that honorable love of labor which is the safeguard of virtue (both for rich and poor); that holy religious faith that contains, secures, and consecrates all our earthly hopes! . . .

But it is certain also, that various causes often combine to produce the same effect, and he who would not merely lament the evils of the age, but rather seek a remedy for them, must combat each and all of these causes. For this reason we must needs ask—did the impious revolution,—these subversive doctrines, find the resigned poor upheld and

protected by the charity of the rich? For the resignation of the one is meant to be sustained and consoled by the charity of the other, the two virtues being sacred duties imposed upon us by God to maintain the admirable order of His Providence and render his decrees easier to obey. And here let us mark the words of a famous contemporary author: "When the poor man lost the patience infused into him by charity, he lost hope; and on losing hope he felt in all its brutal force the—"right of might." And now we ask again, which of the two failed first in Spain—the charity of the rich and powerful, or the resignation of the poor and weak?

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Reader, to whatever clime and nation you belong, if you are rich you must ask your conscience this question; and then ponder well the answer and the remedy at the feet of the crucified, who in olden times heard the poor Spaniard cry to Him: *Señor, aquí está Juan*—"Lord, here is Thy servant John!"

AN EPISODE OF 1812.

I.

ONE of the first victims of the yellow fever in Sanlucar in the year 1820, was a poor charcoal vendor, named Juan Baranga. He lived in a miserable little shop, and carried on his business in company with his friend and partner, Juan Chanca. His body was cast into the common grave, and a few loads of earth caused both him and his memory to disappear.

Obscurity has its advantages, and to be forgotten after death is not the least of them, when that wise law of Solon, which forbids the defamation of the dead is so seldom observed.

Notwithstanding his insignificance, Juan

Baranga merited the honors of celebrity. Had he been born in our days, he might have become a famous economist ; but, as it was, he continued in the humble sphere of a charcoal vendor and—money-lender. His ungrateful country awarded him no sounding title, but his fellow-townsmen had long given him the nickname of Medio Juan, i. e., “Half John,” on account of his low stature and physical inferiority.

Medio Juan was quite conscious of his weakness, and considered himself incomplete both in name and person, and for this reason he had conceived the idea of seeking completion in the person of his comrade, Juan Chanca, whom the neighbors called Juan y Medio, i. e., “John and a Half,” on account of his colossal size. Thus, what was wanting in the one, was made up for by what the other had in excess. Of the two partners, Medio Juan was the intellect that plans and devises; Juan y Medio was the muscular force that overcomes obstacles and carries designs into practice. The former, without going out of his shop, did his best to deceive and take in every

one—including his partner; the latter was always the responsible agent, and to quote him was the last argument that Medio Juan used in his continual discussions with his customers and creditors.

But although the former had over the latter the advantage which mind has over matter, he could never make him the victim of his schemes and trickery. Medio Juan's superior astuteness was kept in check by his physical weakness, and the intellectual inferiority of Juan y Medio was made up for by the exaggerated fear of being deceived; his safeguard lay in the strength of his fists, which at one blow could stun an ox.

On the night of August 25th, 1812, the partners were engaged in making up their accounts. The door was secured inside by an enormous iron bar and on the grimy counter was a miserable lamp. Medio Juan, dirty and smutty, was comparing a number of greasy looking papers covered with enormous figures, murmuring the sums and totals of different little piles of coins which he kept forming from a great heap of money before

him. Juan y Medio, leaning on the counter with his head between his hands, watched him with marked distrust, looking first at the figures written on the papers, then at the cunning face of his companion, and again at the coins as they were piled one upon the other.

Outside the shed a terrific thunder-storm was raging; torrents of rain fell, and the waters descending from the higher parts of the town, threatened to inundate the lower, whilst the sea rising and advancing seemed like a wild beast roaring for his prey.

The little lamps, burning before one or other holy image in the streets, had been extinguished by the rain, the heavy clouds hid the stars in the sky, and only now and again did a vivid flash of lightning light up for a moment the silent and deserted streets.

The storm, however, was not the sole cause of the solitude and the silence. Marshal Soult had just raised the siege of Cadiz, and the French were retiring. A detachment of the latter, quartered in the town were to leave that night; the inhabitants, fearing less the French might mark

their departure by scenes of riot and pillage, had each closed his door, hidden his money and jewels, and prepared himself for defence. The same caution and alarm were manifest in the poorer quarters; not a light was to be seen, not a door opened, no living being appeared; one might have fancied oneself in a city of the dead.

The only sign of life that a solitary passer-by could have detected was a feeble ray of light that escaped through the key-hole and cracks of the rickety door of the two Johns' coal-shed.

"Thirty-two dollars, thirteen reals and a few odd centimes is each one's share, comrade;" at last said Medio Juan, putting his immense goose-quill behind his ear. And throwing the smutty papers over to his partner, he added, "There are the bills that prove it."

Juan y Medio caught them up, and holding them up to the light looked them over on both sides, then threw them on the counter again, and shaking his head—"I can't make anything out of all that," he said in a tone of suspicion.

"Well, and how can I help it if you don't understand anything else but driving don-keys, comrade?"

"Perhaps I know a little more than you think, and am clever enough to help you to square our accounts in another way," retorted Juan y Medio, looking fiercely at the other.

"Well, what's your way of adding up and dividing, friend?" said Medio Juan, quailing beneath the gaze of his formidable partner; "you'll have to make it clearer than the day if you make it out clearer than I have done."

Juan y Medio placed his great sinewy hand on the heap of money and asked his comrade: "What do you call these?"

The other, thinking he was making fun of him, answered sullenly: "Why, genuine coins of the realm, hard-earned dollars, to be sure. What are you driving at?"

"Very well," answered his comrade; "and you, what are you?"

"I?"

"Yes, you!"

"Oh! a rogue and a cheat, I suppose!" said Medio Juan, pretending to be angry

and offended at the mistrust of his companion.

"And I, a rogue and a half, of course," continued the other. "So just hold your tongue and listen to my way of squaring accounts. A dollar for the rogue, another for the rogue and a half. Two for the rogue, two for the rogue and a half. Three for you, and three for me; four for you and four for me;" he went on, making two equal heaps of money.

Medio Juan, biting his nails, watched him in silence, waiting anxiously for him to finish.

All of a sudden they were startled by a tremendous blow at the door, which made its boards creak and shake again.

Medio Juan gave a bound in his seat, extending his hands rapidly over the two piles of money. Juan y Medio, without saying a word or rising from his stool, caught up an old blunderbuss which stood in a corner within reach.

A few moments of complete silence broken only by the brisk patter of the rain which fell in torrents, and then another blow, followed by one louder than the first.

Medio Juan jumped up trembling, while Juan y Medio made a step towards the door, loading his weapon at the same time.

"Who goes there?" he cried in a lusty voice.

His companion caught him by the arm and whispered imploringly: "Stop, for goodness' sake, stop comrade! or we are lost." And rapidly and silently he buried the money in the bottom of an old basket, which he immediately filled up with coal, at the same time blowing out the light on the counter.

The miserable shed would have remained in utter darkness but for the glimmer of a tiny lamp that burned before a picture of our Lady against the wall. Medio Juan took advantage of the semi-darkness to rummage in the bottom of the basket, impelled by his natural instinct of greed, or with the intention of hiding the money better; but Juan y Medio, who never took his eyes off him, dragged him roughly away, saying "Just you leave that basket alone, old fellow!"

"Lord bless us! don't put yourself out,

sir! I was only trying to cover it up better."

At this moment a loud hum of voices was distinguishable above the noise of the rain, followed by renewed blows at the door, and then an angry voice, saying: "*Eh quoi donc! Enfoncez la porte!* (Well then! Break in the door!)"

"The French!" exclaimed Medio Juan, lifting up his hands in dismay.

"The French!" repeated Juan y Medio, opening wide the door, without letting go his hold of his partner.

II.

A TREMENDOUS rush of wind and rain penetrated into the shed on the opening of the door, at once extinguishing the feeble light and sending Medio Juan's papers flying in all directions. At the same time, four French soldiers, enveloped in great cloaks and dripping with rain, burst into the shop.

"Hullo, good man, look where you're going!" cried Juan y Medio, giving a tremendous push to one of the soldiers who had stumbled over him.

The Frenchman lost balance and fell in a sitting posture on the floor, swearing and cursing in his own tongue and threatening Juan y Medio with both fists.

His companions pacified him, while Medio Juan stood trembling like a leaf, and his partner, leaning against the wall prepared to make use of his blunderbuss.

The foreigners however, merely seemed to be examining the walls, as if seeking some outlet; after exchanging a few words between themselves, the sergeant, approaching Medio Juan, asked:

"Where are the donkeys?"

"The donkeys?" repeated the former.

"There are their ears," interposed Juan y Medio, pointing to the shadow caused by the Frenchman's helmet on the wall.

The sergeant turned his head quickly in the direction indicated, and either did not understand the malicious joke, or considered it more prudent to avoid any dangerous discussion; so turning again to Medio Juan, repeated his question:

"Where are your donkeys?"

"My donkeys, your honor?" replied he, "I have not got such a thing."

The Frenchman looked at him very doubtfully, as he continued humbly: "Believe me, your worship, by the glory of my mother! I am a poor unfortunate fellow who has nothing but these few heaps of coal to gain his bread with!"

"Just give me your donkeys," said the

sergeant impatiently, "the captain wants them."

"Señor! por Maria Santissima!" cried Medio Juan. "May the lightning strike me at this very minute if I am not telling the truth."

"Get out of the way, you cowardly fool!" suddenly exclaimed Juan y Medio, giving a push to the speaker. And stepping up to the Frenchman, he continued angrily: "The donkeys are in the stable and their owner stands before you! So now, what do you want?"

"Don't believe him, your honor, don't believe him!" interrupted the other partner, in greater terror than ever. "There's no other donkey here than that man himself, who will be the ruin of me."

"Hold your stupid tongue, comrade, for shame, if you've got any!" returned Juan y Medio. And turning again to the sergeant, who was becoming angry, he added:

"May I know what you really please to want?"

"I want you to give me your donkeys."

"Well, and suppose I don't choose."

"And why not?" retorted the other, astonished at such insolence.

"Because, no Frenchman shall mount my beasts, even if he were Napoleon himself!"

On hearing this the soldiers seized their arms while the Spaniard raised his gun ready to fire upon the first who advanced a step. Medio Juan took refuge in a corner, crying out in anguish: "Don't be an idiot, for God's sake, comrade! Keep quiet with that gun of yours!"

In this conjuncture of affairs a French superior officer, followed by more soldiers, approached the door and those inside the shed immediately lowered their guns.

The sergeant exchanged a few words in French with the new-comer, pointing to the two Johns, one of whom still kept guard with his loaded blunderbuss, while the other seeing peace restored, crept out from under the counter.

The officer at once came up to Juan y Medio and in correct Spanish, said very politely: "Look here, my friend; we are not come to steal your donkeys. We only want

to hire them for a night to carry some barrels of gunpowder to Xeres."

"There you see now, comrade, how their Honors came with friendly intentions!" said Medio Juan, coming forward directly there was mention of money.

"You shall be paid well beforehand," continued the officer, putting his hand into his pocket.

"Even if you gave me my weight in gold I wouldn't help the French," answered Juan y Medio proudly.

"Don't take any notice of him, your honor; that man doesn't know what he's saying," said Medio Juan. "Make the bargain with me, sir, I'd take you to the end of the world."

"Well, how many donkeys are there to be had?"

"Three, and the foal might make a fourth."

"Three are enough. You will come too, of course."

"Just as your honor pleases to command."

The officer, who seemed uneasy, then

gave three pieces of gold to Medio Juan, saying: "Take this at present, and let us lose no more time."

On catching sight of the gold Juan y Medio lowered his gun and made a step forward. His partner, however, quickly remarked: "Comrade, you'll shut the door after us, eh?"—at the same time giving an expressive wink towards the basket where the money was.

"I shall go with you," answered the other.

"But didn't you declare just now that you wouldn't come?"

"And now I say that I will."

"Oh! you always change about," said Medio Juan, shrugging his shoulders, for he knew it was useless to argue the matter.

Just in front of the coal-shed there was a stable in which they kept the donkeys. These were rapidly harnessed with collars and saddle-bags, while the two coal-venders enveloped themselves in rough serge tunics that partly preserved them from the rain.

Juan y Medio, meanwhile, had not let go

his gun for a moment, nor given the least help to his companion, who with wonderful alacrity got everything ready.

"Leave that gun behind," said the officer.

"No, sir!" said Juan y Medio; "this is my wife, and where I go she goes too."

"And where are we going, your honor?" asked Medio Juan.

"To the castle first," replied the officer.

The caravan set out, descending from the upper to the lower part of the town, then taking the road to the castle, which was situated near the beach, a slight distance out.

Any one who had met that silent group of men marching slowly through the deserted streets, whom neither the thunder seemed to move, nor the violence of the rain to quicken their steps, which they calmly accommodated to the pace of the donkeys, —would have been seized with a feeling of awe, such as is inspired by the mysterious and unknown. At times, when the wind ceased to howl and the thunder to roar, the heavy measured tread of the soldiers

was heard above the noise of the rain and produced a strange effect.

Now and then a window was cautiously opened, but the loud patter of the rain prevented the foreigners from hearing the curses and insults with which the occupants of the houses hailed their departure.

From one of the windows a shot was fired that almost carried off the sergeant's plumed cap.

The beach presented an aspect of terrible grandeur, augmented by the awe inspiring darkness of the night. In the direction of the sea, one could distinguish enormous black masses, which at one moment lifted themselves high into the air and the next fell with terrific roaring upon the strand, and between the fearful moaning of the waves and each tremendous crash of thunder, at intervals was audible the lugubrious sound of the warning bell, which serves as a signal to the poor fisherman whom necessity compels to venture forth upon the troubled waters. All at once, a vivid flash of lightning illuminated this awfully sublime scene, and rendered visible the dark outline of the old

castle or fort. In the outer yard was grouped the rest of the detachment of Frenchmen, keeping watch over six barrels carefully covered with straw matting. The soldiers helped Medio Juan to load each of the donkeys with two of these mysterious barrels, which they fastened with strong ropes. Juan y Medio, leaning on his blunderbuss, looked on without offering the least assistance.

Suddenly, while raising with difficulty one of the barrels from the ground, Medio Juan exchanged a rapid glance with his partner and whispered, "They are as heavy as if they were full of gold."

"Perhaps they are," replied Juan y Medio, without moving from his place.

"*Allons! la nuit s'en va!* (Now then! the night is advancing") said an old officer, to whom every one rendered prompt obedience.

The French at last abandoned the fort, directing their steps towards a thick pine forest which began at the other end of the beach. The two officers on horseback brought up the rear, frequently looking be-

hind them as if expecting something to happen. All at once a frightful detonation, which the echo of the waves prolonged, was heard in the distance: the fugitives halted in terror, and looking back towards the old castle saw its haughty tower, that seemed to defy the heavens, and those mighty walls which had withstood the sea, rise into the air and then fall into an immense furnace of flames.

The storm seemed for a moment to stay its fury, as though in amazement that man should destroy that which it respected.

With a diabolic laugh the old officer cried: "*C'est la France qui vous fait ses adieux!*" ("France is bidding you farewell!")

III.

IT was the intention of the French to join the division of Marshal Soult before day-break, when he was expected to be at Xeres ; for this purpose they took a by-path which Medio Juan, who knew every inch of the country, declared would save them a good league of the journey. This was not the reason however, which had induced him to take that path. The crafty fellow well understood that the carefully guarded barrels contained gold, and not gunpowder ; and his natural greed—drawn towards the treasure with the irresistible force of the loadstone towards the steel—had rapidly devised a scheme for getting the whole, or part of it, into his possession.

He determined for the present to lead them by the aforesaid path, which was in reality more rugged and winding than the high-road in order that the very difficulty of

the march might allow him time to think out his project. Juan y Medio also shared the suspicions and desires of his comrade ; but incapable of carrying out any undertaking except by brute force, he placed all his hope in the astuteness of his companion, relying on his superior inventiveness.

For two hours the detachment marched on, spite of the heavy rain and the deep mud. The two partners walked in the middle, leading the donkeys and surrounded by the soldiers, who, notwithstanding the darkness, kept close watch upon them. But the very difficulties of the road obliged an occasional variation of this order, and Medio Juan seized these opportunities to exchange a few hasty words with his comrade.

Presently, in a low voice, he asked :

“Have you got a knife with you?”

“What do you want it for?” answered Juan y Medio, diffidently as usual.

“What for? Perhaps it’s to shave myself with,” replied the other, repressing his anger. “Give me a knife, and two of these barrels are ours.”

Juan y Medio drew out a knife and passed it quietly to his companion. The latter slackened his pace until he was beside the last donkey, then followed in silence. The rain had ceased, and a high wind dispersing the clouds, a star or two appeared. Medio Juan began to sing, at first in an undertone and gradually louder, a few verses of an Andalusian ditty. In the meanwhile he slyly unfastened the bridle of the donkey, fastened one end to the animal's forefoot, and taking the other in his hand he moved closer to Juan y Medio. "Take hold of this rope, comrade," he whispered. "In ten minutes we shall be at the Salado. When I begin to sing again, give it a hard pull and make the donkey fall, then walk on without seeming to notice it. Be on the alert and don't flinch, por Maria Santissima! Give a good jerk to the rope just when I take up the next verse of my song, and if I don't take it up, you keep quiet. Do you understand?"

"Yes," answered Juan y Medio. "I'm ready, my boy."

"Well, keep on the alert, old fellow, and

don't blunder. See if we are not a match for French powder!"

A few moments later he jumped upon the donkey as though he were tired of walking, and quickly began cutting the strong cords which fastened the barrels to the creature's body. Just then the sound of a rushing torrent was distinctly audible and they found themselves in the presence of a stream—the Salado—swollen by the heavy rain, yet at that spot just fordable, the water not reaching above a man's knees.

Medio Juan, mounted on the donkey, kept humming the air of his song, without in the least attracting the attention of the Frenchmen, who were well acquainted with the customs of the Andalusian peasantry. He had made his calculations with such precision that he had just finished cutting the cords as the last donkey entered the stream. All at once he began singing aloud the second verse of his song, and at the last words Juan y Medio gave a sudden and vigorous pull at the bridle. Down fell the donkey, and the barrels slipped off noiselessly into the water, their weight preventing

them from being borne on by the current. At the same instant Medio Juan goaded the animal with his knife, and the poor beast, released from its load, immediately struggled up, dragging its owner to the other side of the stream.

The manœuvre was so rapidly and dexterously executed that the French soldiers had passed through the stream and continued their route without noticing that one of the donkeys was walking on bereft of his load.

Medio Juan began swearing and grumbling at the cold bath the fall of the animal had obliged him to take, the soldiers laughing at his curses and not in the least astonished that his bad temper had cut short his singing.

For nearly half an hour the procession marched on; then they reached a narrow lane flanked on either side by a thick hedge of cactus and also bushes: this, Medio Juan assured them would bring them very soon into the high road again at about an hour's distance from Xeres. On entering the lane the two charcoal-venders exchanged a few rapid words. This lane was

rather long and so narrow that the two thick hedges almost joined at the top, forming an archway of sharp, thorny leaves. In order to avoid these the soldiers were forced to grope along the middle one behind the other, and guided by the tingling of the donkeys' bells.

Medio Juan kept as close as possible to the left, avoiding the thorns but at the same time appearing to feel for something in the hedge with his stick. Immediately behind followed his partner.

All of a sudden the two Juans disappeared into the hedge as though the earth had swallowed them up: they had slipped through a little gateway known only to them, and were in the midst of a small vineyard. It was a moment of supreme danger; for ten minutes they stayed there breathless and motionless, Juan y Medio clutching his blunderbuss, and Medio Juan hiding himself behind the broad shoulders of his companion. At last the echo of footsteps and the tingling of bells died away, the whole detachment had passed through the lane without noticing the disap-

pearance of the donkey drivers. Then Medio Juan jumped up with an exclamation of relief, and said: "Comrade, take to your heels if you don't want the Frenchmen to shoot you!" And the two rushed across the vineyard without stopping to look back. In about an hour they were back at the ford, and began groping in the water to find the two precious barrels which, as Medio Juan had foreseen, had by their weight resisted the force of the current. They rolled them with great difficulty to a ruined hut, a stone's throw from the stream, and hid them in a cavity in which smugglers and tramps often made fires; they had repeatedly done so themselves.

The two partners then separated. Juan y Medio remaining to watch the hidden treasure, while Medio Juan returned to Sanlucar to ascertain whether the French had all left, and to return on the following night with the remaining donkey, in order to transport thither the mysterious barrels. As the former was departing, the other caught him by the arm and cried; "Partner, if you touch that heap of money in

the basket, I'll break your neck, mind that!"

"Oh! you are always bursting with suspicion and jealousy!" replied Medio Juan, offended. "Don't you fear, old fellow! The donkey doesn't gnaw at the manger when they give him oats."

Juan y Medio sat himself down beside the hiding-place, while his comrade set off with an alacrity surprising in one of his rickety constitution, towards the town. Presently he was heard singing in the distance:

The French they came by land,
The French they came by sea,
They thought they'd carry off our gold;
Ah! Ah! what fun for me!

IV.

WHEN Medio Juan reached Sanlucar, the day was well advanced ; in the streets there was a good deal of excitement, the people rejoicing over the withdrawal of the French troops. They had despatched messengers in various directions to find out if the departure of their unwelcome guests was final, preparing themselves for defence in the meantime in case of a return of the invaders. Our charcoal-vender took good care not to say a word of what he knew and walked quickly on to his little shop. This consisted of a large shed, chiefly occupied by heaps of charcoal destined for sale among his daily customers ; on the opposite side was a grimy old counter, with a few false coins nailed upon the surface and a large pair of scales, the balance of which was certainly not that of justice. Over the counter hung

a dirty card with the significant notice :
'No credit given here.'

The first action of Medio Juan on entering his domicile was to examine the basket in which he had so hurriedly hidden the money the night before. He found it intact, and either from fear of the threat of his partner, or because the rich treasure that had come into his possession fully satisfied his greed, he left it thus, merely hiding the basket a little better under the counter. He then rubbed his hands in delight and relit the lamp which hung before the picture of Our Lady. After this he visited the solitary donkey, which saluted him with a melancholy bray. Medio Juan gave it a good ration of hay and oats to prepare it for the nocturnal journey, and then returned to the shop to rest in the interval.

He could not however, keep quiet long; a feverish excitement made him move from one spot to another, spite of the fatigue of the previous night ; and so distracted was he by the fear of the French returning, that he actually weighed without cheating, a pound of charcoal that an old woman came to buy.

About four in the afternoon the news came that the French had joined Marshal Soult's column at Zeres and had continued their march without resting to Seville. Nobody, however, mentioned the adventure of the two coal-venders, nor was it ever known how and when the French detachment had become aware of the flight of the former, and of the robbery they had perpetrated. Medio Juan breathed more freely, and no longer able to restrain his impatience, he got ready the donkey without further delay and set out for the old ruin on the banks of the Salado.

The two men without great difficulty soon loaded the beast with the plunder, and by midnight had returned to the shop.

At last they were in safety and alone, and able to examine and call their own, those mysterious barrels in which they expected to find little less than the mines of California. Medio Juan trembled like a leaf, spilling the oil out of the lamp with which he lighted his companion. The latter, with one blow of an axe broke open the top of the first barrel. Medio Juan

opened wide his eyes to see the heaps of gold coins that he expected—nothing was visible but a layer of sand! Juan y Medio broke out into loud curses.

“How now! comrade! How now!” cried his partner in anguish; “sand from the sea! nothing but sand from the sea! As if they hadn’t got the same in France?”

“The other plunged his hand into the barrel and struck against something hard, he pulled it out, and lo! the silver cross of a ciborium, then the gold cup of a chalice. . .

“Lord Jesus!” exclaimed Juan y Medio, standing back in alarm. Medio Juan became pale as a ghost and lifting his hands to his head, murmured: “We’ve done it now, comrade! Now we’ve done it!”

Juan y Medio seized the barrel and with one vigorous shake emptied the contents on the floor. There fell out among a quantity of sand a number of gold and silver chalices, beautiful ciboriums, and reliquaries enriched with precious stones and pearls. Medio Juan bent down to pick up one of the chalices.

“Don’t you touch that comrade! Don’t

touch that with your dirty hands or they'll wither up!" cried Juan y Medio in terror.

After a bit they opened the other barrel, that also was filled with rich church plate stolen by the French from cathedrals and churches.

Juan y Medio sat himself upon the counter without uttering a word, while Medio Juan let himself fall on the heap of charcoal, groaning and sighing.

"We've done it now, partner! We've done it now!" he repeated.

"Three donkeys thrown away! Two nights of fatigue and a pain in my back so that I can hardly stand upright, with that cursed bath in the Salado!"

Not for a moment did it enter the minds of those scoundrels to appropriate the rich treasure that belonged to the Church. So great was the respect for sacred things at that period, that not even the most depraved would have stolen or even touched them. The word 'sacrilege' had such an influence upon the avaricious minds of those two thieves, that angry as they were at their disappointed hopes, their losses and fatigue,

they dared not nevertheless, recompense themselves by keeping even the least part.

Juan y Medio kicked furiously against the boards of the counter.

"And what are we going to do now!" he asked suddenly.

"Why, look out for a tree and hang ourselves!" replied Medio Juan, sighing.

"But where are we to take all that?"

"How should I know? Go and call a dozen acolytes and let them come and fetch it away!"

"But can't you see," exclaimed Juan y Medio, "that if we get into the hands of the police we shall find ourselves in a worse plight!" and he jumped off the counter in a rage.

"Don't be a fool, comrade! No one has been hanged yet for giving back what didn't belong to him. To-morrow we will tell the parish priest and then do what his reverence orders."

This the two partners decided upon, never venturing to lay a finger upon the Church's stolen treasures.

The parish priest determined to acquaint

the Bishop, and two days afterwards the latter was in possession of the plate.

The two Juans received a sufficient compensation for the loss of their donkeys and for the fatigue they had undergone.

“And what sort of men are those?” inquired the Bishop of the priest.

“They are two fellows of bad repute, who under cover of charcoal selling, lend money at an exorbitant interest.

The Bishop crossed his hands in admiration. “Blessed be God!” he cried, “and blessed be the land where even the worst men respect holy things! As long as this feeling prevails among our people we need not fear that the revolution which has disgraced France will triumph in our beloved country!”

Yet half a century later the revolution had broken out in Spain too, and the banner of socialism was unfurled, property threatened, and society shaken to its foundations.

Let us hope that those evil days, through God’s mercy, are over, though their traces will long remain.

MEN OF YORE.

I.

ON the 8th of April, 1579, an extraordinary animation reigned among the troops that were encamped on both sides of the Meuse round the walls of Maestricht. German, Burgundian, Irish, Italian and Spanish soldiers were moving about eagerly in their respective quarters, with that orderly activity which always denotes unity in the directions given and fidelity in their execution.

The light cavalry of the gunners was occupied in bringing bundles of furze and heather from the country side; some were making faggots of these with which to fill up the moat, others were filling baskets of

earth to protect the manœuvres of the artillery, and sacks of wool or hops to fortify the trenches.

A few were leading the gun-carriages drawn by oxen and placing the cannon for the bombardment of the walls on the strong bulwarks raised to an equal height with the defences. All, in fine, were preparing for the assault, which after a three months' siege was to take place at the dawn of the following day.

This mixed multitude of men was directed and encouraged by an officer who, mounted on a bay horse and accompanied by several others, visited and inspected the different barracks. He was quite unarmed, and simply wore a long blue overcoat, trimmed with marten skin and a cap of the same fur. This officer was no other than Alexander Farnese, Duke of Parma and Placencia, governor general of the Low Countries in the name of his Catholic Majesty the King—Don Philip II., surnamed the Prudent.

In the background might be distinguished the black walls of Maestricht, unhappy

city, then afflicted by the triple scourge of war, famine and heresy. The heretical soldiers had sacked the Catholic temples and destroyed the images of the Saints, or they had placed some of these latter on the walls and batteries where they were most exposed to the Spanish archers and artillery.

One of these statues of great size and beauty, represented the Blessed Virgin holding her Divine Son in her arms. They had placed it on the battery which was nearest to the Catholic trenches, and the soldiers, dressed up in sacerdotal vestments, were parodying the ceremonies of Catholic worship, and even audaciously walking about near the edge of the fort adorned in this sacred attire. Sacrilegious provocation! arousing in the Catholic Camp that sacred ire which is always the producer of great actions; that holy anger which the cowardly indifference of our days cannot understand and therefore calls it intolerance and fanaticism; that holy anger which the spirit of truth itself counsels and justifies in the words of Holy Writ: *Trascimini et nolite peccare*. Be angry and sin not.

The beating of the drums had already announced to the soldiers the hour of retiring to their respective quarters ; at night-fall a second signal warned them to enter their barracks, and it was then forbidden to circulate in the camp without giving the watchword of permission to the sentinels.

During this interval a strange spectacle was taking place in one of the barracks of the Spanish Tercios—an ancient and famous regiment of infantry ; a spectacle ordinary enough then but which would be considered very strange in this nineteenth century, and might raise a scoffing smile in many a raw recruit of our age of incredulity and rebellion.

In a kind of square left free between the rows of tents was a crowd of soldiers, some sitting, others standing and forming a large circle.

In the middle of the group, standing upon a plank placed across a big drum was a man of low stature and weakly appearance: he wore the habit of a Jesuit, and holding aloft a crucifix, he was preaching the word of God to those dreaded Tercios' ; preparing

them to die, and thus teaching them to conquer.

And that crowd of warlike men—many of them fierce and cruel, but all rivals of the Machabees in courage, if not in virtue—was listening with bowed heads to the tremendous truths of religion, and many eyes were moist with tears, and more than one iron gauntlet struck the steel corslet beneath which beat a contrite heart.

For the characteristic features of that age—so vaunted by some and so calumniated by others, that in which it differed from our own, were the spirit of lively faith which burnt in every breast and profound respect for the priesthood, which lent an irresistible force to christian reproof and correction. An accommodating code of morals had not yet distorted the meaning of the words—good and evil. For this very reason, the many who did evil knew that they drew upon themselves public censure, the fear of which induced shame and remorse, which when purified engenders humility of spirit and holy repentance, thus obtaining pardon and assuring amendment.

Many officers and soldiers separated themselves from the group, directing their steps slowly towards some tents that were distinguished from the others by the cross that surmounted them ; they were going to confession to some Jesuit missionaries who had been invited by the Duke of Parma to the royal quarters, and who had answered the call with alacrity, in order to exercise their sacred ministry among the troops.

A young and noble looking officer had just returned from guard on one of the two bridges of boats that kept up the communication between the army on either side of the river. He wore the showy red and yellow uniform of the infantry, and his want of corslet denoted his grade of ensign. Young, petulant and boisterous, he had received several admonitions from the Fathers which had excited his animosity ; nevertheless, he stopped and took his place among a group of officers, who, seated on some bundles of fodder, were listening to the word of God at a few paces from him who was preaching it.

The sun had already set—for many of those listeners for the last time—and the

walls of Maestricht seemed like an enormous black shadow on the pale red of the horizon. The heretics had lit two immense fires on the walls, one at each side of the statue of Our Lady that they had placed on the edge of the bulwark. By their light the sacred image was plainly visible, her back turned to the apostate city and presenting her Divine Infant to the Spaniards, as though begging protection from their faith, the faith which He had cemented on Calvary.

Turning towards the walls, the Jesuit pointed to the sacred image. "Who would not have the courage to rescue it?" he exclaimed. "Let us do it, and at her feet we will give thanks for the taking of Maestricht."

On hearing these words, the young ensign threw his gauntlet on the ground and cried in a tone of arrogance, that resulted from his old resentment rather than from real insolence, "May I never tread on Castilian ground again if that John Fernandez there does not think it easier to scale the bulwarks than to give his absolutions!"

The words reached the ear of the preacher.

He immediately got down from the drum, and with raised crucifix approached the group of officers. His insignificant person seemed to have grown taller ; his meek appearance had vanished, giving place to an imposing air of majesty which had something superhuman in it.

"Do you know who I am ?" he exclaimed, seizing the haughty ensign by the arm.

"Yes ;" replied the latter, half troubled, half astonished.

"Do you know that I am a priest ?"

"Yes."

"Well, then, on your bended knees at my feet kiss the hand that blesses and absolves in the name of Christ."

And the voice of Juan Fernandez as he spoke these words was so commanding that the young soldier, subjugated by its power, uncovered his head, bent his knee to the ground, and kissed the hand that the Jesuit extended to him.

The rest looked on in deep silence, and the young officer rose to his feet again. Then Father John cast himself on his knees and bent his forehead to the earth. "You

have satisfied the honor of the minister of God, Sir ensign," he cried; "the man humble, ugly Juan Fernandez, is not worthy to kiss the dust at your feet! Spurn him, Señor Alvar de Mirabal; if you do so you will only tread upon a mass of misery and corruption."

The young officer burst into tears. At that moment the beating of the drums gave the second signal for retiring and the group slowly dispersed. Two hours afterwards a profound silence reigned throughout the camp, interrupted only by the occasional shout of the sentinels on the alert. A man, however, might have been seen wrapped in a long black cloak and coming out of the tent occupied by Father Fernandez. It was none other than the ensign, Alvar de Mirabal, who, after having been to confession to the Jesuit had sworn at his feet to die in the assault or to rescue the image of Mary which the heretics were profaning.

II.

THE artillery of the enemy was beforehand with the Catholics on the following morning; the day had hardly dawned when a cannon ball shot from the tower of St. Peter badly wounded five soldiers just arrived in the trenches and killed the sergeant, Tello Paez, who was thus the first victim of that day on which so many others were sacrificed. The signal 'to arms' was immediately given from the ducal quarters and the troops hastened to the posts already assigned to them. Following the line of trenches, six strong bastions had been erected to an equal height with the defences, and upon them forty-eight great siege guns had been placed in order to open a breach in the strip of wall that joined St. Anthony's Gate to St. Peter's. A mine had also been laid under these same trenches as far as the edge of the moat, beneath which it passed

and hiding an immense deposit of powder under the very foundations of the great gate of St. Servasius. This mine was intended to burst when the batteries had split the stretch of wall they were besieging, so as to divide the attention of the besieged between the two breaches ; its detonation was also to serve as a signal for three brigades of Walloon soldiers and four of the Spanish infantry to attack the gates of St. Anthony and St. Peter ; while the German infantry, the gunners, and other four detachments of Spanish were to do the same at the gate of St. Servasius. The remaining brigades were to wait until the besieged gave signs of fatigue and then, at a second signal, attack that part of the fortifications called the Burgh, which being lower and the moat dry, might be easily assaulted by means of scaling ladders.

It was precisely in this part of the walls that the heretics had perched the statue of Our Lady ; it was poised on a narrow ledge just under the loopholes and at a considerable height above the Catholic trenches. In these last the ensign Alvar de Mirabal, was to be seen, pale and silent, waiting with

ill-concealed impatience for the signal of attack. He had laid aside his buckler and sword, and merely carried two pistols in his belt and a long Flemish pike called a spring-stock in his hand.

The demolition of the walls took many hours, for the besieged, being directed by a French engineer and a Spanish traitor were exceedingly prompt in repairing the breaches. Alexander Farnese on horseback, wearing a broad red scarf with his arms embroidered in gold, and surrounded by his aides-de-camp—Don Pedro de Toledo, Carlos de Manfelt, Lope de Figueroa and several others—occupied a small eminence in the interior of the camp, giving orders and receiving reports. The cannon on the batteries kept up a hoarse roar, like the thunder that precedes a storm. Towards mid-day, in the midst of a cloud of smoke, the wall was split in two and an immense tower was seen to totter and lean to the side of the ditch.

Alexander gave the signal and a hundred drums and trumpets broke forth into a triumphal march; and immediately after, the cannon were silenced, every sword was

stayed, the long pikes arrested and the flag that floated over two worlds was lowered to the dust. Those iron clad men, whose souls were so courageous, those fierce warriors eager to throw themselves upon the enemy, first bent their knees for a few moments in the midst of the solemn silence to implore the aid of the God of battles. Such was the custom observed by all christian armies before beginning the fight.

The Duke of Parma then gave another signal. A fearful charge and an awful detonation sounded at the same time, and in a moment the span of wall and the gate of St. Servasius both disappeared as rapidly as the scenery changes on the stage. The mine had burst and the real assault had commenced.

Instantly afterwards, a man appeared as it were suspended in the air between the Catholic trenches and the Burgh battery; he was seen to sway for a moment on the edge of the parapet that supported the image of Mary, regain his balance by a vigorous effort, and then let fall the spring-stock which had helped him to make that pro-

digious leap. There he was, alone, unarmed, perched upon that narrow cornice. Under his feet a considerable depth, and above him an immense number of the enemy.

The warrior did not waver ; he seized the statue, large and heavy as it was, and letting himself fall from the height of the battery, rolled over and over until he reached the ground, without having relaxed his hold of the image. He then rose to his feet, and though bleeding from several wounds seized a shield and the first weapon that came in his way ; and with the cry—“ *Santiago! Virgen Maria!* ” joined the tercios, who like a terrible avalanche were at that moment throwing themselves upon the walls of Maestricht.

The hero was none other than Alvar de Mirabal, who had thus fulfilled the vows he had taken at the feet of Father John Fernandez.

III.

IN the meanwhile, both besiegers and besieged were fighting with equal courage and ferocity at both the breaches. In that part of the walls, the terrible impetus of the walloon vanguard had been arrested by a strong separation made of chains and sharp pointed poles, and a counter moat full of sharp nails and bits of iron. It was taken at last, however, with great slaughter on both sides, on the arrival of four battalions of tercios from the rear who fought hand to hand on the very top of the wall. In the great breach at the gate of St. Servasius a fearful struggle had also been taking place; the defenders had shown the greatest activity in repairing the damage, helped by three thousand women divided into companies, who were bringing them earth and planks, or throwing shells, stones and boiling water upon the German troops and gunners.

The latter on their side filled up the ditches with faggots, earth and rubbish that they gathered from the ruins of the tower, and thus made a road by which to reach the enemy. The dead were falling on either side but none thought of yielding. The heaped up corpses across the breach increased the difficulty for the Catholics to enter, while facilitating the defence for the heretics.

The Duke of Parma then commanded the rest of the army to attack the Burgh Gate. Fifteen hundred men rushed furiously to the assault, and succeeded in taking the moat before the besiegers had time to fire a single shot. The Catholics were already placing the scaling ladders, many were climbing the walls, and a captain of artillery even managed to plant thereon a blue flag bearing the image of Christ crucified, a fac-simile of the one which Pius V. sent to Don John of Austria before the battle of Lepanto. At this moment the cries of victory, "Santiago! The Burgh Gate is taken!" reanimated the courage of the combatants in the two breaches before mentioned.

At this juncture a frightful report was heard ; and then, men, stones, arms, ladders, earth, human limbs, in horrible confusion, were seen flying in the air and then to fall heavily into the trenches amidst a cloud of smoke and powder that lent the horror of darkness to that awful spectacle. The heretics had struck a mine, which, by the aid of the three companies of women, they had secretly laid under the Gate of the Burgh, thus destroying that valiant company that contained the flower of the Catholic army. In that terrible slaughter perished Fabius Farnese, the Duke's cousin, the "Marquis de Malaspinas," the "Conde de San Jorge," the "Conde de Mondoglio"—and forty-five captains of renown with more than two thousand soldiers of different nationalities. The final victory was thus rendered impossible, and Alexander Farnese ordered the siege to be raised for that day at least.

In the evening the Duke visited the barracks, encouraging the soldiers, consoling the wounded, and distributing abundant relief with that generous liberality and grace

that he inherited from his predecessor and dear friend, Don Juan of Austria. In an angle of the barracks occupied by the Spanish tercios the soldiers had placed the statue of Our Lady rescued by Mirabal, on a gun-carriage covered with a flag they had taken that very day from the enemy. The Duke inquired the meaning of this, and was then informed of the scene that had taken place the evening before between Father John Fernandez and the young ensign, and the subsequent exploit of the latter, who was there present.

“Bring hither that horse!” he cried to a page, who was leading it behind an officer bearing a short lance, the gilded hilt and silken tassel of which was the badge of a Captain of Spanish Infantry. “There, take them both, Señor Alvar de Mirabal; he who can risk such an undertaking is well worthy to command a company!”

Alexander then asked for Father John, but he was not to be found. All the soldiers had seen him during the assault in company with the other missionaries, in the most dangerous places, consoling the

wounded and assisting the dying. Later on he had been seen in the large tent put up for the wounded in the middle of the camp, but since then nothing was known of him. An old soldier, however, suddenly remembered that Padre Juan had questioned him minutely about the position of the ditch at the Burgh Gate, where so many wounded had been abandoned without help, and that he had then re-entered his tent with exclamations of pity and grief. "Look at him! Look at him! There he goes!" broke forth all at once several voices, and those on higher ground could distinctly perceive Father John crossing the trenches. He went alone, slowly, fearlessly, with no other arm than the crucifix hung round his neck, towards the great ditch at the Burgh Gate. The heretics saw him from the walls and discharged a small cannon at him, but the Jesuit continued his way unmoved without increasing or slackening his pace. The enemy shouted with rage, while the Catholics, guessing his design, watched his steps with bated breath. On reaching the ditch another discharge sounded above him, and

the priest fell at the edge and rolled over into it and lay motionless upon the heap of dead bodies at the bottom. The shades of night slowly cast their gloom over that field of desolation, and then one might have discovered that the heroic soul of the Jesuit Missionary had not indeed left his body. He raised his head cautiously from the pillow of corpses, and listened eagerly if any rumor of the enemy was to be heard at the edge of the trench. No sound came to his ear. He therefore sat up and stretched out his limbs, benumbed with that hour of immobility in which he had feigned death so as to escape the fire of the heretics.

Then he began groping among those cold, stiff bodies, whispering tenderly: "Brother, are you still alive? . . . I am Father John Fernandez, come to confess you, so that you may save your soul. . . ."

Sometimes there was no reply; sometimes a faint groan revealed the presence of life in its most frightful aspect, of a soul for whom there was still hope of absolution and heaven. In these cases, the priest would crawl in the direction of the moan and repeat

his timid question ; a second groan answered, and he at once removed—all dark as it was—the corpses that oppressed the wounded soldier ; then, bending his ear close to the lips of the dying man, he heard his sins, gave him absolution and thus opened for him the gates of heaven.

In this manner he went through all that part of the trenches and had confessed forty-two dying soldiers.

When this sublime act of charity—but most fearful tax on human strength and courage—was accomplished, Father John climbed with great difficulty to the top of the ditch just before dawn, and, covered with blood and mud, exhausted with fatigue, and hardly able to walk for want of food, he returned to the camp.

The advanced posts in the trenches greeted him with shouts of joy and enthusiasm, which soon reached the ears of the Duke of Parma, who was at that moment about to leave his tent and to give his orders for the second assault. He hastened towards Father John, and withdrew him from the group of officers and soldiers who

were leading him back in triumph to the camp; then the hand that was stiff and tired with fighting grasped his, which was benumbed and wearied with blessing and absolving, and carried it respectfully to his lips. And immediately conducting him to his own horse, the Duke said: "Mount, Padre Juan, and ride to my tent; there a warm reception and an affectionate welcome awaits you." Then turning to the new Captain Mirabal, who had hastened with many others to the spot, he continued: "Hold the stirrups for him, Alvar de Mirabal, and own that this time it was a more heroic exploit to give an absolution than to scale a bulwark. . . ."

The authors and works from which the details of this historic narrative have been taken are the following:—

Padre Alcazar S. J.—*Historia de la Compañia de Jesus en la provincia de Toledo*. P. Nieremberg S. J.—*Vida del Padre Juan Fernandez*. P. Famiano Estrado S. J.—*De Bello Belzico*. Luis Cabrera de Cordoba—*Historia de Felipe II*. El Commendador de Alenga Don Bernardino de Mendoza—*Comentarios de las Guerras de los Países Bajos*. El Marques de la Espina Don Carlos Coloma—*Guerras de los Estados Bajos*.

MIGUEL.

. . . . I have no objection to your publishing this episode in my life, if it appears to you in any way useful: I only beg that you will not embellish my portrait with the delicate touches of your pen. Represent me such as I was and—thanks be to God!—such as I am, so that those who read may be the more deeply struck with the truth of the words which you one day repeated to me while strolling together in C; *Nihil longe est a Deo.*

(Extract from a letter to the author from Miguel himself.)

I.

THE attention of the intimate friends who were admitted into the private sitting-room of the rich widow de H was imme-

diately attracted by a strange object placed at the foot of a magnificent ivory crucifix, that hung at one end of the room under a canopy of black velvet. The said object was a kind of reliquary, beautifully carved in silver and adorned with splendid emeralds, which shed their lovely rays now in the bright light of the sun, or again in the soft reflection of two lamps that burnt on the chimney-piece. Any one would have expected to find under the crystal centre of this precious jewel some venerable relic, or at least a holy picture: nothing was to be seen however but an ordinary silver coin, a crown piece bearing the effigy of Isabel II. scratched and pierced through the middle. The first time that I saw this extraordinary object, I asked myself in surprise what could possibly be its meaning; and so absorbed was I in these reflections, while waiting for the lady of the house, that I did not hear her light footsteps on the carpet as she approached.

“ Handsome emeralds; are they not?” she said, smilingly, in a way that proved that she had remarked my curiosity.

"Magnificent!" I replied, somewhat troubled at having been caught in the act.

"They well deserve to adorn a relic."

The lady began to laugh, but she soon replied, gravely: "For me, that coin is a true relic: it saved the life of my son, and changed his heart completely. . . . That is why I have placed it at the feet of Our Lord as an exvoto."

My face at the moment must have betrayed such an evident expression of inquiry that my lady friend smilingly added: "When you see Miguel, tell him from me that he must relate this story to you."

Soon after I sought Miguel but I could not get a word out of him; my friend was very philosophical and answered my questions with the famous sentence from the Koran: "Speech is silver but silence is gold;" adding that according to Rabbi Effendi, an illustrious Turkish poet, nature had bestowed on man two ears and only one tongue, to teach him that he should always be readier to listen than to speak. I urged him to satisfy the desires of my two ears with the words of

his single tongue ; but it was all in vain. It was evident that his oriental studies had made him distrustful of friends in frock coats.

When the frock coat was changed for the cassock, however, he became more confiding, and a few years afterwards he related to me the following story, never suspecting that I should betray his confidence to the public. The epigraph to the following lines was written to me quite recently, however, by Miguel himself, who is now an excellent fellow and father of five children.

II.

IN former years Miguel was, in every sense of the term, a wild, dissipated youth; not however a libertine, who becomes such through his own perverse instincts and depraved ideas; he was one of the many victims which the hypocrisy of vice makes among inexperienced youth. Led away by evil company, he began by feigning libertinism, in order to accommodate himself to the customs of his companions; and he had ended by becoming in reality as much of a libertine as any of them.

His father, a rich proprietor in a country town of Andalusia, had in no way occupied himself about the education of his son. When the boy was fifteen, however, he took great pride in watching him hunt the hare on a galloping mare with the security of a skilful jockey; or tilt the cows on the farm with the dexterity of a "picador" in the

arena ; or, again, riding through the village fair on a splendid Andalusian colt in the national costume, to the admiration of the beholders.

The boy's mind and character had not been left uncultivated, however, his excellent mother had guided with tender solicitude the first movements of the heart of her beloved son ; those first impulses towards good which receive their being in the caresses of a christian mother, as a flower derives its life from the sap of its stem, and of which may be said in a certain degree, what a Father of the Church has said of the soul:—so great and noble is it, that though sin may obscure and mar its beauty, it can never efface or destroy it.

Miguel's good mother, as we have said, had infused into the heart of her son a love of virtue—faith, as his duty ; hope, as his consolation ; and charity, as his joy ; and she had, moreover, so wisely fomented the child's natural instincts of compassion that they soon developed into noble acts, which, considering his tender age, might almost be called heroic.

In a word, Miguel was, morally, at eighteen years of age, an excellent youth, who loved his mother enthusiastically, preserving in all their freshness and luxuriance the holy ideas and pure sentiments which she had inculcated. Physically too, he was almost perfect. This handsome face might have seemed hardly refined enough to figure among the specimens of masculine beauty that adorn our fashion books, and which form the cream of the elegant youths of our day : it was, on the contrary, of that genuine manly type which unites natural distinction and refinement to a certain frankness and ready wit, but which, too, if pushed to extremes, may give an air of swagger and impertinence.

About this time his father decided that Miguel should go to study law in Seville ; and the young man, provided with letters of recommendation to his relatives, left home, to his mother's deep regret, for the beautiful city of Andalusia.

Among his many good qualities, Miguel had one grave defect, which became the cause of his perdition : an exaggerated

amount of self-love and a domineering character. Accustomed hitherto to deal only with his inferiors whom he commanded, and by whom he was flattered, he could not make up his mind to become, in the society which he was now entering, a sort of secondary personage, encountering at every step his equals, and very frequently his superiors. His having so little mixed with aristocratic society had engendered in him, too, a certain bashfulness and timidity which frequently placed him in an awkward position when he found himself in this new sphere, and which he had not strength of will to overcome by the apprenticeship through which all young men must pass when they begin to frequent the society of ladies.

One of those slight and often ridiculous incidents which leave so deep an impression on sensitive minds, and which often become the turning point in a young man's career, upset him completely. Shortly after his arrival in Seville he paid his first visit to an elderly duchess whom he did not know personally, but who was a distant relation of his father.

The lady received him with the affability and good breeding proper to persons of high station: very soon Miguel perceived that the drawing-room was gradually filling with ladies and gentlemen, who had come to offer their congratulations to the Duchess on the occasion of her name day; but the poor youth did not dare to take his leave before such a fashionable audience, notwithstanding his desire to withdraw, and in his mental struggle he let the hours pass by unnoticed. There he sat until the bell rang for dinner, when the Duchess approached him smiling, and said:

“Of course you will stay to dinner, Miguel.”

Our hero became as red as a tomato, and neither daring to refuse nor to accept, bowed in silence and followed the other guests to the dining-room.

After dinner the company returned to the drawing-room which soon began to fill again with newcomers, as though all the elegant society of Seville had there given *rendez-vous*. Miguel was in despair for, much as he desired to retire, an opportune moment

for taking leave of his hostess never seemed to present itself. At eleven o'clock tea was brought in; the Duchess, noticing the young man's embarrassment, came up to him again, and smiling kindly offered him a cup of tea, saying:

"Come, Miguel, do me the favor."

Miguel wished he could disappear under the floor like the fairies in the pantomimes, but recognizing the utter impossibility, he accepted the proffered beverage again in silence.

Meantime it had begun to rain in torrents; the guests at last retired as their carriages were one by one announced; and Miguel, who had been waiting since three o'clock in the afternoon for an opportunity to take leave, found himself alone face to face with the Duchess, who could scarcely help laughing at the sad and ashamed looks of her young relative. The poor boy stammered some excuses; but the old lady, no longer able to refrain, burst into laughter and interrupted him, saying:

"I cannot allow you to go home alone at this hour, Miguel. . . . It is past mid-

night, and pouring down rain . . . You live too far from here and you do not know the city. . . I cannot lend you a carriage, so you must resign yourself to sleep in my house, unless you wish to offend me."

As the earth would not open to receive him, and in the impossibility to retire by the window, Miguel was forced to consent, though he was ready to cry with vexation.

The kind old lady, with the authority of her superior years and the relationship she bore to his father, gently took the silly fellow's arm and led him herself to the apartment of her only son, who was then travelling in Italy. Once alone, Miguel threw off his coat and rushing to the bed buried his head in the coverlet, tearing his hair like an enraged child who has been locked up as a punishment.

The following morning a servant came to tell him that her Grace was waiting for him to accompany her to Mass in the private oratory and after that to breakfast. Poor Michael heard Mass with very little devotion, breakfasted with still less appetite, and then,

as though pursued by the devil, he rushed down the carpeted stairs of the house, where he had come for a twenty minutes' visit, and where he had remained nearly four and twenty hours through his foolish bashfulness. But the climax was waiting for him at the door: the kind Duchess had ordered her brougham to be ready and poor Michael was obliged to allow himself to be driven home in state.

This simple incident, the recollection of which would have excited laughter in any one else, terribly exasperated Miguel's self-love: he, in common with most youths who make their "début" in society, fancied all eyes to be fixed upon him and persuaded himself that he had now become an object of ridicule in the sight of all Seville. This idea was so rooted in his mind that he determined to avoid for the future that refined society to which he of right belonged, where a youth may easily lose his virtue but rarely his gentlemanly manner, and to seek the company of friends of low condition, among whom he dominated on account of his fortune and profession, and by whom he

was gradually led into all kinds of vice and excess.

Thanks to these friendships, during his first term Miguel become a wild, scapegrace student, a frequenter of Café's and Concert-rooms; at the end of the second, he was already a dissipated *habitué de taverne*.

III.

MIGUEL'S good mother would now have hardly recognized her once candid and sensitive son in that licentious, dissolute fellow who, with his hat thrown back, a pipe in his mouth and obscenity on his lips, casting off the yoke of education and despising even all human respect, wore only a well defined look of devil-may-care insolence. That young man, whose language scandalized and whose manners shocked ; who from the Café had descended to the tavern ; and who, flying from all cultivated society, now sought only that of jockeys and bull fighters, with whom he was on the freest of terms.

But his poor mother had not in vain directed towards virtue and religion the first impulses of the heart she so loved. Though rotten and corrupt on the surface, like diamonds under a coating of slime,

there still lay dormant in the depths of his soul the pure sentiments of his childhood.

While he was being first led away by his evil companions, and afterwards as their leader, Miguel ran blindly in the path of vice. He would sometimes suddenly stop short, as though his heart were listening to some distant echoes ; he would then seem to enter into himself and turning his steps backward would seek the solitude of his room, where without realizing it he would shed those bitter tears of the soul that desires—but yet fancies she can never have the courage, to break through the bands of sin with which matter has bound her. For was not his pious mother at that very hour kneeling by the empty couch of her absent son, lifting up her pure hands to heaven in his behalf, beseeching his guardian Angel to hold him back, to whisper words of warning and counsel that might guide him to the right path again. Ah! how many straying sons never return to a virtuous life because their mothers do not pray for them! how many of these sinful wanderers would become perhaps other Augustines, if their

mothers did but shed for them the tears of Monica! How many of these unhappy paralyzed souls would go down at last into the piscina of grace, if they were not compelled to exclaim with the paralytic at the Pool of Bethesda: *Domine hominem non habeo!* Lord, I have no man to help me! . . .

As to Miguel's father, he only shrugged his shoulders when he was told of the wild life of his son: he laughed at what he called his madcap tricks, and only wrote to him now and then, with a message for the directors of the Amphitheatre about the price of some bulls he was sending for the next fight, or to send him a good cheque or two to prevent the youth from having to borrow money.

As long as the lad keeps safe in his stirrups—he would say—let him run his race. Let him have his fling. . . . Let him sow his wild oats. He doesn't want much science, for he has plenty of money. . . . A handsome fellow like him, with the name he bears and ten thousand a year, will marry a princess when once he settles down. . . .

Meanwhile, May was drawing to a close and the examinations approaching, and Miguel knew not a word: on the rare occasions when he assisted at the lectures, he either went to sleep—snatching thus a little rest after the previous night's orgies—or he would amuse himself by drawing caricatures of the professor dressed as a toreador, when he was not reading some obscene novel. He had a vague recollection that Justinian had made an abridgment of the Roman Institutes, but he was by no means certain whether this illustrious personage had been an emperor, a general, a jurisconsult, or some suburban mayor. The wise old professor, a friend of the family, advised him not to present himself for the examinations; but Miguel, with that insolent audacity which had taken the place of his former timidity, rejected his advice. He sat up for two or three nights, keeping himself awake by drinking strong coffee, and studied lightly over the assigned subjects; satisfied with this preparation, he presented himself in his turn, quite determined to make fun of the examiners, or to get up a quarrel if his

natural wit or his lucky star should fail him ; or if the half dozen glasses of brandy which he had imbibed by way of precaution, hoping to find in them a certain amount of eloquence, should not produce the desired effect.

The questions put to him were concerning the organization of the Roman family ; Miguel, with many intricate arguments and a few flowers of rhetoric, answered, that it was composed, more or less, of husband and wife, sons and daughters, and many or few servants. The examiner, hearing him rattle on, in this absurd way, curtailed the questions, with the desire of getting him through if possible.

“What happened in a Roman family when the father died?” he asked.

“Why what should happen?” answered Miguel, in a doleful tone. “All the others were awfully cut up, of course!”

One of the professors began to laugh, thinking the youth was a simpleton ; another manifested his indignation because he considered him to be a scoundrel ; but the old one, who took him for both one and the

other, addressed him once more, but in sharper tones.

"Good. . . . What have you to say concerning the law *Taria Caninia*?"

Miguel looked him full in the face, and with the greatest impertinence replied :

"It is the first time I have heard it named even."

And taking up his hat, he made a low bow to the astonished examiners and left the hall.

His usual companions were waiting for him at the door, and they celebrated the young student's insolence with roars of laughter and coarse jests. The latter, before leaving the university, smashed the tablet containing the names and qualifications of the candidates, for before his own he read—suspended; he threw the beadle's cap into the fountain because he dared to remonstrate with him; and to celebrate the result of his examination, he invited all the band to a spree at a famous tavern, situated behind the beautiful gardens of the city, which was the usual resort of pleasure seekers of a low type.

On passing through the market near the university he noticed an enormous heap of pumpkins and water-melons: he bought one that weighed over twenty pounds, and had it packed and despatched by train—carriage paid, to his father, with the following inscription: Fruit of a whole year's study. (It may be necessary to explain here, that in Spain the expression used to signify failure at any examination is—*Dar Calabaza*, i. e., "to get the pumpkin"—equivalent to our term—"to be plucked.")

Miguel's father only laughed at his son's wit; his mother wept over it in silence.

IV.

SOON after this event, Miguel might have been seen one night coming out of a gambling house, where he had lost all his money except a single gold piece worth two dollars.

Notwithstanding this he walked away with head erect—for nothing could now cast him down or cause him to reflect—and his hands plunged into his pockets, and turned into a long, narrow street which led to the abode of a gypsy, nicknamed "Serious" who gave lessons in comic singing. All at once his footsteps were stayed, his head bent forward in the attitude of listening; and his heart, which never felt the least fear, began to beat violently with alarm; sad and pitiful, there had fallen on his ears a wailing sound rendered still sadder in the silence of the night; a pitiful plaint that pierced his soul, filling it with indignation at him who might be the cause; the plaintive

cry of an innocent, defenceless, perhaps abandoned, child !

Miguel ran towards the spot from whence the sound proceeded, with the anxiety and eagerness to give relief which charity inspires. Huddled up in a doorway, its little face lying on the bare ground, a baby only a few months old was sleeping ; it still held in its tiny hand a hard crust that its toothless gums rejected, and spite of the hardness of its cold bed smiled sweetly in its slumber! . . .

Another child about eight years old, brother of the infant, was crying disconsolately close by it : he held in one hand some lottery tickets—emblems of that fortune which for him was so adverse ; and in the other a false dollar, which he kept striking on the stones to try the sound. Both Angels of God, children of Our Heavenly Father ; the one smiling unconsciously in its sleep, the other kept awake by sorrow and fear! . . .

“What is the matter, little one?” asked Miguel, with such compassionate interest that his voice trembled. But without answering, the child continued crying ; crying

as though his grief expected no consolation ; as though there were no remedy for his misfortune ; as though his lips dared not utter the name of " mother " because she was no more !

" So young and so innocent, and yet weeping thus !" thought Miguel. " And I who am guilty, I spend and I rejoice ! . . . So many without bread, and what I eat does not turn to bitterness in my mouth ! . . . Great God, where is Thy justice ! . . . "

Thus reasoned the scapegrace, making God responsible for the fault of man ; but down in his heart a grave voice answered him : " Cease thy murmurings ; the justice of the Creator is not to blame, it is man's perversity : if only those who *could* did but wipe away the tears that they *ought*, how many less would flow in this sad world ! . . . God has not created the rich for enjoyment, nor the poor for suffering ; he commends the latter to the protection of the former, imposing charity upon the one and resignation upon the other. Riches are a debt contracted towards indigence ; and for this reason, the rich man who closes his purse

and his door against the poor man is a vile robber!" . . . Almost weeping himself, Miguel continued asking the child the cause of his grief. At this moment the watchman came up, and the boy yielding to their united instances told them that a man had bought one of his lottery tickets with the false coin he held in his hand, and that he dared not go home with it for fear of being dreadfully beaten by his father.

Miguel gave a sigh of relief, for could he not wipe away those tears and bring joy to that young heart? He sent the watchman to the nearest tavern to change the two-dollar piece (all that remained to him of his month's allowance) for two silver coins, and giving one to the boy he put the other into his waistcoat pocket. Surprised and delighted, the child followed Michael some distance with exclamations of gratitude: but our hero, recovering his air of bravado and strong mindedness, went on his way pretending a disdain and indifference which he was far from feeling. His head, still aching from the heavy atmosphere of the gaming-room, was in a whirl of confused ideas which

he could hardly define: he saw before him the heaps of gold on the roulette-table, and also the sorrowful face of the child, now smiling at him through his tears like a star peeping out from among the clouds; he saw the fatal hook drawing in one by one his gold pieces, and he saw, too, the dirty little hand of the boy holding tight the precious coin which saved him from cruel blows: the voices of the gamblers cursing their ill-luck still sounded in his ears, but now like sweet music, the voice of the child echoed back: "May God reward you, sir!"

At one moment he felt half angry; at the next, inclined to cry.

In this state of mind Miguel reached the tavern of the gypsy, the tipsy voice of whom seemed to him more disagreeable than ever. The noisy jokes of the company there assembled became very soon insupportable. Annoyed and bored, he at last left the place and bent his steps homewards, feeling all the while an aching void, an anguish of soul, which tormented him cruelly without his being able to guess the cause.

“What can be the matter with me?” he kept asking himself.

But his reason, obscured by a life of sin, could not answer him then that it was his nobler sentiments awaking at the tears of a child and, struggling to break through the mire of passion which had buried them, were groaning to be free; chafing and fretting to escape, as good does from evil, as that which is refined and noble does from all that is coarse and low, as all that is pure and heavenly does from what is vile and earthly.

It was now past midnight, and in the dark silent streets no one was to be seen. But on turning round a corner near his lodgings, Miguel felt himself suddenly seized by two thieves, and while one of them threatened him with a huge dagger, the other tried to relieve him of his watch and money. Miguel, who was strong and courageous, struggled violently and succeeded in throwing off both his assailants, and drawing out his revolver rapidly fired after them; one of the men fled at the detonation, but the other, furious at being baffled, rushed

back upon him and stabbed at him with the dagger. The steel blade made a grating noise as though breaking against something, and Miguel felt a strange blow at his waist, which at the time he could not account for.

The sound of a shot had quickly brought the watchmen to the spot and they immediately examined our hero to see if he were wounded. The point of the dagger had come in contact with the crown piece left from the gold coin, which Miguel had changed when he gave the alms to the boy, and remained imbedded therein, but opposing fortunately a stout resistance ; otherwise the young man would have been killed at once.

“What a lucky chance !” exclaimed the watchmen, as they inspected the pierced dollar by the light of their lanterns.

But Miguel saw therein the finger of God. Miguel, whose mind and heart had suddenly awakened, wept tears of true repentance, the aurora of an efficacious conversion which did not make either a hermit or a trappist of him, but it made him

what God willed him to be—a good christian, and excellent father and husband. Miguel wept, and from the bottom of his heart murmured—“ Blessed, blessed a thousand times be the merciful Providence of my God ! ”

V.

THIS was the story which Miguel's excellent mother desired him to relate to me ; and I, hearing it from his own lips, could not help exclaiming :

Happy is that son for whom a loving mother prays !

DUST AND DIRT.

I.

.... IF my son persists in refusing to learn a profession then I will oblige him to learn a trade, for I do not wish his youth to be corrupted by idleness : I desire to furnish him with the means of gaining an honorable livelihood. To-day I am rich, but who knows what changes may come . . . fortune is fickle.

(Extract of a letter to the author from a parent.)

THE first time I saw Manolo H—— I was a boy of twelve, and was staying at the time at the home of my dearest college friend, Fernando. The latter had an elder brother who was a great friend of Manolo ; and he

one day proposed to take us to the beautiful old Castle where his friend lived, that he might show us a splendid lion which had been brought from the Sahara and encaged alive in a natural grotto in the magnificent park.

When we arrived on the esplanade facing the Castle, we noticed several carriages drawn up before the handsome marble steps leading to the principal entrance. One of these particularly attracted my attention. It was a stylish phaeton drawn by four pretty ponies with blue and silver harness.

On catching sight of it, Fernando exclaimed, "Oh! Currito Pencas is there!" and clapping his hands with delight, with one jump he was out of our carriage.

I asked him who Currito Pencas might be, and he told me he was a famous bullfighter, a great friend of his brother and Manolo, and president of the Tauromatic Club to which they belonged.

"To-day they are going to Picoto farm to choose the bulls for Thursday's sports," he went on eagerly. . . . "My brother is to be toreador and Manolo will help him. I can't

do anything yet, I am too young, but when I get big enough I will go into the arena and plunge the darts and streamers into the bull's sides. I won't be like that stupid Manolo who keeps well in the background, but I will give the final blow and kill the bull straight off." While we were going up the steps, he put his hand into mine and asked me affectionately: "Wouldn't you like to be a 'torero' too?"

"No," replied I, seriously, "I want to be a midshipman."

"What a stupid you are!" he cried, pushing me from him; "then you will never have a phaeton and handsome ponies like Currito Pencas."

I shrugged my shoulders, and followed after my little friend's brother, who after taking us through various passages and a large billiard-room brought us to Manolo's smoking-room. This was a large square room with carved oak ceiling and doors; the walls were lined half way up with the same, and the remainder covered with rich Cordova embossed leather. Complete suits of antique armor stood in the four corners of the hand-

some apartment, and four splendid panoplies of ancient arms hung on the walls. These were further adorned by two large portraits of a lady and gentleman in seventeenth century costume. The furniture was also of carved oak of the sixteenth century style. But upon this severely magnificent foundation, Manolo had thrown in profusion all the elegance of our age, all the dainty nicknacks that satisfy our inconstant wishes, the caprices of fashion and the extravagance of passing whims. Scattered about in every direction, with the disorder belonging to a capricious character, with whom the act immediately follows the desire without waiting for reflection, there lay all kinds of objects. Old china and new, musical instruments, arms, whips, game bags, fencing foils, water-color drawings, photographs of celebrated singers and scandalous women, and a hundred artistic or extraordinary objects on the furniture, on the walls, on the floor. In one corner was a most extravagant trophy: a stuffed bull's head with gilded horns, surrounded by 'banderillas' and daggers. On the suit of Milanese armor was thrown a scar-

let velvet and satin toreador's mantle. At the feet of the sixteenth century dame was the portrait of a French ballet-dancer; and under this again, enclosed in a rich frame and surrounded by a laurel wreath in silver, was a white satin slipper, relic of the above notability, whom Manolo—at the age of twenty-two—called “the last illusion of his life”!

Another thing also struck me very much; Manolo had hung a torrero's hat over the family escutcheon that surrounded one of the sixteenth century cupboards, completely hiding the coronet which Isabel the Catholic had bestowed upon his heroic ancestors. Whether this was done merely by chance, or intended as an allegory, it is certain that Manolo never added to the quarters of his escutcheon any other emblems than that head-gear, hitherto unknown in heraldry.

When we entered the apartment, Currito Pencas, astride on a beautiful chair said to have belonged to Madame Dubarry, and which Manolo had bought at an exorbitant price in London, had the talking all to himself. He was relating his last journey to

Paris to give a bullfight, and the little differences he had had—according to his own account—with Napoleon the Third, who occupied the presidential box!

Pencas was a man of about forty, of perfectly modelled form and features, though his face bore just that tinge of vulgarity which is met with in handsome types among the people; his whole person nevertheless reflected an air of graceful elegance, not without dignity, and made him attractive at first sight.

He wore a deep purple velvet jacket, and under that a smart waistcoat, open to display a finely embroidered shirt front which was fastened with immense diamond studs; round his waist was twisted a bright colored sash, and over it fell an enormously thick gold chain, which must have cost a goodly sum.

Manolo was sitting at his right on the oak table, and around them were ten or twelve youths, the cream of society, and at the same time aspirants to the Tauromatic Club.

“Go on, Currito, go on,” exclaimed

Manolo, inviting him to continue his narration, which had been interrupted for a moment on our entrance.

“Well, the upshot of the story is that Napoleon is a poor specimen. There he kept me about, not deciding which day the combat was to take place; and I, bored to death in their fine Paris, on the boulevards all day with no one to talk to, and so chilly as it seemed of an evening. Well, the day was fixed at last, and if you could have seen the whole thing, gentlemen, you would have died of laughing. All the people were as glum as possible, and when the first bull came out the band merely struck up a minuet.”

At this there was an explosion of laughter and clapping of hands, but Currito put an end to it by continuing his tale.

“I killed the first animal on the run, which would have brought down the house in Seville. But in that country, gentlemen, nobody knows what the profession is; so, without a whisper of applause, I crossed the arena with my traps in my hand to do homage before the imperial box. There

was my lord Napoleon as stiff as a statue, and the Empress, and the Prince Imperial, and a lot of 'Messieurs' and 'Mesdames' as thin and dried up as can be. The Empress made a sign for me to come up to the box. Napoleon put on his spectacles, looked well at me from top to bottom, and, gentlemen, as though nothing more than the court cat had entered his presence—he turned his back on me and began gossiping again with an old dame with a large white thing on her head. 'I wonder what old tower that owl has come from?' said I to myself on catching sight of her. They told me afterwards she was the Duchess of La Motte, but she didn't look up to much anyway. That contempt of Napoleon irritated me famously I can tell you. But the Empress at last, like a Spaniard as she is, behaved quite like a country-woman. She told me she had seen me in Granada in former years, and cautioned me to take care of accidents, not to risk my life too much, etc., etc. All of a sudden, the old dame with the white head-gear came and spoke to me

with an air of—‘ Look at me, but don’t touch me.’

“‘ But you make the poor bull bleed too much,’ she said.

“‘ Well, if you don’t want to see it, you’d better not come, Madame,’ I answered, loud enough, but I don’t know whether she understood me. The Empress did, for she began to laugh, pretending it was a fit of coughing.

“Well, while the father was talking and the mother was laughing, up came the little boy, and pulling me by the tassels of my jacket, in pretty Spanish, whispered in my ear:

“‘ Won’t you give me that pretty costume?’”

“‘ And why wouldn’t I, if you like it, my jewel,’ said I. ‘ You shall have it at home this very evening.’ His sweet little face quite delighted me.

“That very night I sent it by two of our lads to the Tuilleries, with my card.

“ The next night while I was shaving to go to the opera, who should be shown in but a

Monsieur Colifleuri, chamberlain or something to the Emperor.

“ ‘ Señor Pencas, I believe,’ says he.

“ ‘ At your service,’ says I.

“ And with twenty bows, and Señor Pencas every minute, he made me a speech, saying that the Emperor had sent me four bank-notes for a thousand francs each in payment of the dress I had presented to his son.

“ The blood rushed to my head, gentlemen, for it seemed to me that that man had offered me a second insult by sending me four thousand francs for a present I had made! . . .

“ But recovering myself, I threw the notes on the table without looking at them, as though they were waste paper. You can teach him how to be a gentleman yet,’ says I to myself. So turning to the chamberlain, I said, familiarly :

“ ‘ Sit down, Monsieur Colifleuri, and take a cigar with me. . . .’ And I drew out the gold filigree cigar-case that the Queen gave me.

“ ‘ What a lovely jewel!’ says he.

"Yes, it's not ugly," says I. 'That was given me by the Queen of Spain.'

"And what splendid cigars!" says he again.

"Pretty good," answers I, 'the King of Portugal sent me six boxes of those.'

"Colifleuri opened his eyes wide as a fish, but I, as serious as a judge, quietly made spills of the bank-notes, lit them at the lamp and offered them to him to light his cigar.

"Oh! Señor Pencas! you are burning the money," cried he.

"Don't trouble about that, Monsieur," I replied. 'I have still a few more in my pocket to buy an organ and a monkey with for the Emperor, if ever he should want to come to Spain and earn his living.'

"What's that you are saying, Señor Pencas? . . .'

"I am saying, in case you do not know it, that Currito Pencas is no old Jew. I say that what Currito Pencas gives, good-will may repay, but money never; and I say that neither the Emperor of France nor the Emperor of the Globe shall bring a blush to the face of Currito Pencas. Do you follow me, Monsieur Colifleuri? do you understand? . . .'

"I am shocked and bewildered."

"Well, there is a glass of water to refresh you," says I, turning my back on him.

"That very night I called our boys together and we took the train for Madrid."

Currito was silent and the enthusiasm of his audience was at its height. Those polished young gentlemen, enthusiastic for the Paris that Veuillot called the university of the seven deadly sins,—were indignant that refined and elegant Paris had seen in their idol nothing more than a talkative gipsy, and the dignified conduct of Napoleon they considered as a crime against their hero, and the insolence of the bull-fighter as chivalrous an act as that of Count Benavente when he set fire to his house rather than allow the Constable de Bourbon—a traitor to his country—to enter it.

The foolish youths therefore acclaimed the torrero Pencas with cries of "Well done! Bravo! Well done, Currito! Well done, Seville," and they carried him round the room on his chair just as he was and placed him on the table.

"Well, it was quite natural, gentlemen,"

said he from the height of his apotheosis. "He who can cut down six bulls every week may well take down an emperor once in his life. . . ."

At that moment the door opened, and a negro servant in olive green livery brought in a tray loaded with bottles, glasses and plates. He was Manolo's footman and he had brought refreshments for the young gentlemen.

Manolo himself helped Fernando and me to a glass of wine and some pastry, and then ordered the man to take us to see the caged lion. Undoubtedly, the presence of two innocent witnesses was a drawback to the complete expansion of their elders. But Fernando, who did not see being taken away from Currito Pencas, completely rebelled against going, and screamed and resisted to such a pitch that his brother had to come and drag him out on to the veranda. There he ordered his own groom to accompany us to the cave of the lion and then to take us home in the gig that brought us. Shortly after, we could hear in the distance the fine baritone voice of Manolo

above the shouts and the roars of laughter ; he was singing to the measure of the clinking glasses the famous toast of Maffeo Orsini in Lucrecia—

*Il segreto per esser felice
So io per prova e l' insegnò agli amici. . . .*

Fernando clinched his teeth with rage. "If I were the lion, I would break my bars and eat up that lamp-post of a Manolo and my brother," he exclaimed.

Nevertheless, he had to restrain his temper and resign himself to mount with me and drive home, while we watched the joyous troop get into a large brake drawn by four horses, with Manolo for driver, and drive off in the direction of the Picota farm.

On the road we passed two hired carriages, from behind the drawn curtains of which came frequent outbursts of women's laughter. The groom, who was extremely familiar with Fernando, said something with a strange smile which I could not make out. Fernando answered him, but I did not understand. He then remained silent and

thoughtful and I, to rouse him, gave a pull now and then to his short hair.

"Let me alone," he said sharply, "don't be childish." And more and more pensive, he gazed upon the two coaches that seemed to be also going to Picota.

Poor Fernando! . . . Three months afterwards he died, after a few days' illness; and his mother would not allow a confessor to come near him.

"Why should we frighten him? He is an innocent angel," she said! . . .

Ah! they are not innocent angels at the age of thirteen, the children that their mothers have abandoned into the hands of servants from their earliest infancy!!

II.

THUS passed the days with Manolo ; like a peal of golden bells, joyous, noisy, and empty, for idleness opens the door to every vice to which opulence lends the charm of refinement and seduction.

His parents had never denied him the least of his desires, had never thwarted his tastes, and never contradicted the slightest of his whims ; that uncultivated nature therefore grew twisted, like a noble plant left to itself on a piece of waste land.

The months glided by and he never felt the imperious necessity of conquering himself, nor did he realize that the creatures around him had any other destiny than that of serving his selfishness or satisfying the pleasures in which he saw the end of existence ; for in this Manolo went further than he who said :—" Let us eat, drink, and be merry ; for to-morrow we must die."

Manolo thought that death had no meaning for him !

At length his father died and the fortune had to be equally divided among his six children ; and that fortune, which was thought to be so immense, appeared terribly lessened by careless administration, and charged with debts—that rust and moth of over indulgence and luxury which undermines and ruins many a noble house.

That brilliant youth who imagined himself so powerful, now found himself possessor of only a modest revenue, which he had still to wait for, and accustomed from his infancy to habits of luxury and license.

For the first time, he found his thoughts forced beyond the horizon of horses, bulls, and dogs, drawing-rooms, casinos, theatres, and lower haunts, where he had hitherto lived submerged ; and he understood that after opulence comes mediocrity, after which might follow poverty. Not for a moment, however, did he think of giving up the luxuries and plenty to which his parents had accustomed him. On the contrary, he proposed to sustain them by seeking to

make—‘*une ! marriage de convenance*,—and marry the daughter of some banker or rich merchant ; to contract one of those alliances in which the son-in-law intends to prop up his tottering house with the money bags of his future father-in-law, and the latter seeks in the parchments of his son-in-law’s pedigree a certain dust of antiquity for his own flaming new escutcheon.

But, according to Manolo, matrimony was the tree on which the husband hung himself ; and when the hour of choosing the tree therefore arrived, it happened to him as to Berthold : he could never find a suitable one. He next thought of dedicating himself to politics ; but his ignorance closed the door to any post of importance, and his idleness and inexactitude were an obstacle to advancement in any career where ambition and impudence may succeed, but where modesty and merit remain in the background.

Meanwhile, the months flew by and Manolo’s money with them ; so much so, that at the end of two years he had exhausted his paternal heritage. But this did not

cause him to moderate his luxuries, nor to diminish his expenses ; he merely left unpaid the debts which he contracted on every side, and from folly to folly, from meanness to meanness, he at last lived by borrowing, and lost all shame. He managed to drop into dinner every day at one or other of his noble relatives' houses ; he borrowed money where he could ; he would walk a mile out of his way to avoid meeting his creditors—the tailor, the shoemaker, the coiffeur and perfumer ; but he pawned his jewels, and even his clothes, to buy camellias for a popular actress, or to satisfy some similar caprice which he called “a duty of society” as an obligation due to his rank. How many bitter pangs it cost him, nevertheless, to stifle the sentiment of honor which exists in every well born soul so long as he has not completely degraded himself ! What a blush of shame came to his face the first time he had to refuse payment of a debt that was pressed upon him ! What a feeling of shame took possession of him the first time he entered a pawnshop ! What a humiliation when he heard himself

talked of among the members of his club as "the young man" who dines at his friend's every day.

He owed for the very clothes he wore ; he was obliged to save up for the price of a pair of gloves ; and yet had not given up his horses and carriage ; he had not yet withdrawn his subscription to the club, nor given up his box at the theatre ; the thousand and one refinements he was accustomed to seemed to him absolute necessities ; as he had never learned to deny himself, they had become to him a second nature.

He was one day driving his stylish dog-cart with a smart groom behind him, when all at once a desperate looking man, armed with a huge stick, threw himself at the horse's head, and with a vigorous jerk brought the vehicle to a standstill. Indignant at such insolence, Manolo raised the whip to chastise the man, whom he had not recognized as the carpenter of the Tauro-matic Club to whom he owed forty pounds for various items. The latter, however, rushed at him, and seizing the elegant young man by the throat, muttered furiously :

"My children are crying for bread while you are driving in a fine coach! . . . Pay me what you owe me, scoundrel, or I'll strangle you!" And at the same time the vigorous arm of the artisan was raised to bring down his stick on the shoulders of the young nobleman.

Struck dumb at the suddenness of the attack, Manolo nevertheless shook off his assailant, and threw himself out at the other side of the vehicle; and more alarmed than confounded, more angry than ashamed, he slipped through the crowd that had gathered round, while the unfortunate carpenter was shouting: "Coward! Cheat! Hide yourself in the centre of the earth if you like, but I'll have my money out of you! . . ."

This incident filled our young libertine with dread; and lest the angry workman should carry out his threats he determined to pay him. But where was he to get even that paltry sum of forty pounds? In the actual state of his funds it was a sum of importance. Preoccupied with these thoughts, to kill time he directed his steps early that evening towards the house of one of his

relatives—the Countess Z——, whose only daughter was to be married within a few days. He found the ladies in the splendid Moorish drawing-room. The young lady's wedding outfit was there displayed, and several lady friends had come to contemplate, admire, criticise and envy that immense collection of lovely things, which was worth forty thousand pounds. Jewels, rich materials, clothes, laces, and a hundred beautiful objects of every kind were spread upon tables and couches.

Manolo greeted the lady of the house affectionately. She was attired in the richest of black silk befitting her rank and her age, and her abundant white hair, fastened with a handsome tortoise shell comb, made one think of the beautiful heads on a Roman cameo. There was that in her dignified and amiable bearing which betokened piety and firmness, gentleness and prudence.

Our hero bowed to the other ladies, and then followed them in their inspection of the wedding outfit and presents.

“O what a lovely thing!” exclaimed one

of the ladies, stopping before some rich old lace prettily arranged over pale blue satin.

"That was sent by my cousin, Lady M——," replied the countess; and, putting down her handkerchief on the table, she unfolded the lace and showed it to the admiring group, saying: "This belonged formerly to Queen Anne Stuart and was the ruffle of one sleeve only, and yet it is valued at five hundred pounds."

"Well, I don't consider it a very delicate attention to give a thing that has been worn like that," sneeringly observed one old lady, who was powdered and painted to her heart's content, and who found fault with everything.

"And yet to me it seems the most delicate of all," answered the countess; "for that lace was given to my cousin's great-grandmother by Queen Anne herself, and in order that it should not go out of the family she has given it to my daughter."

"Be it what it may," continued the old coquette, disdainfully, "but I would never put on other people's old clothes, even a queen's."

"Old clothes like these a princess might desire for her adornment," replied the countess, with a tinge of sarcasm; "but to show you that my cousin can give more than cast-off treasures, here is another present from her." And lifting the lid of a rich silver casket she pointed to a quantity of immense pearls, unstrung, thrown in like nuts in a box.

"But there is quite a fortune there!" exclaimed one of the ladies in astonishment.

"I have not even counted them," said the countess simply.

At this Manolo suddenly raised his head, and twisted his moustache abstractedly, with his eyes riveted on the precious gems, while the critic continued:—

"Well, of course it was easy for Lady M—— to make a collection of pearls; her husband was Viceroy of India."

The countess was about to reply again, but she was interrupted by the entrance of a footman who announced the arrival of other visitors. She therefore went into the next drawing-room to receive them, followed by the group of ladies.

Manolo, who seemed preoccupied, profited by the general movement to take his leave.

"You are **not** going, are you?" said the countess, taking his hand.

"Oh, yes!" replied the young man. "I shall look in at our club and then go and hear the 'Huguenots.' The tenor was splendid last night."

"But you will come to dinner to-morrow, it is Wednesday."

"Certainly I will!" replied Manolo, and looking at the other ladies he added, smiling, "Where should I find an Amphytrion like the countess and such dishes as her cook can make?"

"Well, I shall expect you without fail."

"You quite spoil me, dear Madame."

"Old ladies like me find pleasure in spoiling young men, my son," said the kind countess, as she bade him good-bye.

Manolo slowly descended the grand staircase, buttoning his gloves; but on the first landing he stopped and seemed to be searching for something that he could not find either in the pockets of coat or trousers;

he then turned back and re-entered the Moorish drawing-room, as though he had forgotten something. The ladies had all gone and he was alone ; he looked furtively round him and then rapidly stepped, on tiptoe, to the table where Queen Anne's lace and the casket of pearls were lying ; there he remained a few moments, looking round in every direction in alarm ; twice he stretched out his shaking hand, and twice he withdrew it with dread and fear ; then he stretched it out again, and, pale as a ghost, his knees trembling under him, he caught up four of the rich jewels. As he did so, a suppressed cry and the rustle of a silk dress sounded in his ears ; it came from the further end of the room. The thief turned his head in terror and saw a slight movement in the curtains drawn between two columns that formed the doorway. The unhappy youth stood for a moment rooted to the spot, his tongue parched with fear and his eyes fixed upon those curtains ; then he darted forward and pulled them aside.

There was no one there, nothing but a pocket handkerchief, finely embroidered with

the coronet and initials of the countess. It was the one which she had laid upon the table when she unfolded the old lace.

Manolo gave himself up for lost; he rushed out of the room, down the stairs, and into the street. He ran across streets and squares; on, on, without knowing where he was going, still grasping in his unclinchèd hand the stolen pearls. That suppressed cry, that rustling of silk, still echoed in his ears, and to his overwrought imagination every passer-by seemed to point to him as "the robber! the thief!"

On he went, until, panting and weary, he reached one of the bridges of the city, which at that hour was deserted. There he stopped, and, leaning over the parapet, he cast the four valuable gems into the turbid torrent below. Then at last, by one of those strange illusions of passion so common to our nature, the noble young thief thought himself out of danger, imagined himself absolved, and throwing himself upon a seat he breathed freely.

III.

IT was one o'clock the following day, but Manolo was still in bed, yet he could not sleep ; from the dawn when he went to bed he lay anxious and thoughtful, his eyes fixed upon the floor. Perhaps for the first time in his life his mind yielded to reflection, which is sure to lead to good results if only the conscience be not deadened. By the light thus kindled he saw the precipice which passion had hidden ; it stirred the depths of his soul and awakened the remaining sparks of honor and shame. He was horrified that he should have thought of paying a debt by a theft, and he was determined to seek some means of avoiding complete ruin, and saving his honor in the eyes of the world. He racked his brain to find some way of leading a quiet and orderly life.

But in vain did he combine circumstances,

and invent schemes. His reason was submerged in a sea of opposite ideas ; it seemed to waver like a flickering light, only leaving clear before his mental vision the artisan's threatening cudgel, and that silken curtain that moved as a witness coming to accuse him before the judge.

Furious at the thought, Manolo turned over and bit his pillow in despair Again he turned his thoughts and his eyes in every direction, and again were they forced into the narrow circle of ignominy where his debts and his dishonor imprisoned him. . . . The unhappy youth thought not of God, whose mercy no one had ever shown him. He lifted not his eyes to Mary, our refuge in every trouble, for no one had taught his childish lips to call her Mother!

His imagination brought before him in fantastic shadows the far off days of opulence and happiness, and added fresh anguish to his present misery by the knowledge that all that had been lost without remedy, and partly through his own fault. His anguish was keen and bitter ; such grief as

awaken, sin the soul of him who suffers, a feeling akin to the impotent rage of a condemned criminal.

“Ah!” sighed the wretched young man, “if only I knew how to gain my living; if only I had the strength of will to overcome myself! if in my childhood they had punished my insolence and resisted my capriciousness . . . Alas! my father would never allow my tutor to correct me, and now a workman attacks me. . . . My mother was furious if a professor reprehended me, and now I am threatened on all sides!” And poor Manolo hid his face in the pillows and cried like a child, without consolation from his fellow men, for he dared not confide his troubles to them; and without consolation from heaven, for he had never learnt to call upon the Father of all mercy. . . . Ah! if his father and mother could have contemplated from eternity the grief and ignominy of their son, how prudent would they then have considered the provision of wiser parents, who, rich and opulent as they were, and noble, too, did not disdain to give an honorable profession

to their sons, thereby assuring the fortune of the future, ever uncertain, and in our age more so than ever. How salutary would they deem the strict discipline of a Christian college, which by accustoming the child to obedience and work preserves the man from idleness and arrogance! How profound the meaning of the words of Louis the Fourteenth, when, overcome by the violent temper he had never conquered, he yielded to a fit of anger unworthy of a king, and afterwards exclaimed with regret: "Were there then no rods in the kingdom when I was being educated? . . ."

A knock at the door at last aroused Manolo from these bitter reflections. On hearing it he started up with the feeling of alarm peculiar to an uneasy conscience, and dared not answer. The door was opened however, and his valet brought him a letter.

Our hero examined the writing on the envelope without being able to recognize it, and at last decided to open the letter, when there fell out a number of bank-notes worth nearly a hundred pounds. Manolo thought

he was dreaming ; presently he noticed that a letter accompanied the notes, without signature and couched in the following terms :

“ I know the struggles of life and how dangerous they are to inexperienced youth. Allow me therefore to offer you the benefit of my experience, impelled by the friendship I had for your father. From to-day you can solicit an appointment under government suited to your tastes, and I will guarantee your securing one. And in case you should at present be in one of those pecuniary difficulties so frequent among young men, I will permit myself to offer this modest loan, which cannot wound your feelings, as I shall myself reclaim it when you are able to return it.

“ My young friend, it is not work that dishonors us : take courage therefore, and listen to a piece of advice that may perhaps be bitter, but which is intended for your good. He who has been proud and prodigal in prosperity will find it hard to bear adversity with dignity. But if you wish to do so easily, practice your religious duties, and soon that noble virtue of christian

resignation—daughter of holy faith, will take root in your soul.”

Manolo read the letter over and over again; and out of his wits with joy he jumped up and began to dress. Not one thought of gratitude, however, to his mysterious benefactor entered his mind; not one movement of thanksgiving towards Divine Providence which had so marvelously come to his aid rose in his selfish and ungrateful heart. His only thought was—now I can pay that dreadful carpenter. The promised appointment was the foundation of many plans for a new life, and by degrees his anxiety vanished, his fears were dissipated, and at last he persuaded himself that it was impossible that the countess should have discovered his theft. Might not the wind have moved the curtains? Were they not of silk, and so would produce the rustling sound? As to the handkerchief, might not the countess have let it fall as she passed, after taking leave of him at the door? But the little cry. . . . ah! that stifled cry, which before had so alarmed his guilty conscience, now appeared to be a

freak of his imagination. It occurred to him at length—as it ought to have done from the first—that perhaps it was the countess herself who had written that letter. Unable however to understand in others the delicate generosity which was so completely wanting in himself—a trait always found in mean characters—he again examined the writing and composition, which he considered disconnected, and said to himself with conviction : . . . “Quite impossible ! . . . In her place I should have thrown the thief out of the window. . . . That letter must have come from some old friend of my father who heard of the row that cursed carpenter made.”

Thus do men often, and thus did Manolo always delude himself. He drove away his fears by the wishes that he transformed into realities, and when dinner time approached he dressed with his usual elegance, and, as coolly as he could, set out for the residence of his noble relative. “Pluck, pluck,” he kept repeating to himself as he drew near the house and his fears assailed him anew.

"If no one knows anything, I risk nothing. If they suspect anything, my audacity will confound them. If they know all, I can still deny it, or beg pardon and confess all. I can do the pathetic, which no woman can resist."

As he crossed the wide entrance hall, the lacqueys rose and saluted him respectfully, and Manolo felt a blush of shame mount to his forehead. His legs trembled as he mounted the stairs and found himself before the door of the drawing room, his heart fluttered to such a degree that he was obliged to halt there for a few minutes. Recovering himself at last, he entered the room with a firm step, and saw that the countess held out her hand to him with her usual cordiality; not the least sign of surprise, or indignation, or disgust was visible on her amiable features, which wore as they always did the impress of queenly dignity, and saintly gentleness.

Manolo's joy was so keen he was on the point of betraying himself; restraining it however, as best he could, he began to chat and joke with the other guests. The count-

ess on her side seemed quite prodigal in her attentions, helping him herself to the dishes he liked best ; and when, quite late at night, he was about to leave, she asked him, in a way that every one might notice : “ Are you going to the Opera again, Manolo ? ”

“ Yes, I hope to catch the last act of ‘ Lucia,’ ” replied the young man.

“ Well, will you do me a favor and save me writing a letter ? . . . The Baroness H—— will be there, pay her a visit for me and give her this letter, it contains the money I owe her for some lottery tickets.” And the good lady placed quite ostentatiously in Manolo’s hand, so that all her guests could see it, an envelope well filled with bank notes. This mark of confidence completely dispelled our hero’s remaining doubts and fears ; and, full of joy, he went off to the theatre, repeating : “ She knows nothing, I am sure ; nothing, I am saved ! ”

On returning home in the early hours of the morning, as was his wont, it occurred to him to read the anonymous letter once more, when he remarked a particularity which had not before struck him ; it emitted

a strong perfume of Russian leather, which he knew the countess preferred to all others, and which impregnated all her belongings.

"It is impossible that she should have written it though," he exclaimed, as he threw the letter angrily from him: "If it were so, the woman would be the demon of dissimulation!"

The ungrateful youth ought to have thought. "What an angelic delicacy. . . ."

Notwithstanding his fresh doubts, Manolo rose the next day calm and joyous. He had planned to pay his debt at once to the furious carpenter, whose cudgel inspired him with serious alarm; then he intended to acknowledge all his other debts, and when he had obtained the post he desired—something in the Russian Embassy—he would pay them off by degrees from his salary. He would be able to live economically in that distant country and at the same time make the acquaintance of colder regions, and enjoy new pleasures.

After lunch, therefore, he set out with the money in his pocket to pay the unfortunate carpenter, for he feared that if he

trusted the commission to his valet the latter would deduct some of the arrears of his own wages. Not far from the carpenter's workshop he stood still to give passage to a stage-coach loaded with young gentlemen. The driver, one of his boon companions, drew up and shouted to him: "Manolo, aren't you coming to the Hippodrome to-day?"

"No, no, I cannot," he replied, moving on as he recognized six or seven of his elegant friends.

"Manolo! Look here! Come back! We are going to the races!" they all began shouting after him; and one of them jumped off the coach and caught him by the arm, while another took an uncorked bottle of sherry out from under the seat, and holding it up cried: "If you don't come, I'll shy this at you."

Manolo still tried to excuse himself! when the young man who held the reins bent down and said to him in German:

"You have no money to bet with, I dare say."

This little speech, uttered with the evident

intention of humiliating him, by the son of a rich banker whom Manolo in his aristocratic pride called, ' The Marquis of L. S. D., irritated our hero extremely, and he replied, also in German, with a tone of arrogance.

"How much do you want me to bet with you now?" And without further thought of debts or cudgels he jumped into the coach and accompanied his friends to the races.

An hour after the lunch, the forty odd pounds he owed the carpenter were all lost besides a few other bets, and he owed several pairs of gloves to a fashionable Marchioness who made bets with all the gentlemen, and talked of jockeys and horses with the knowledge of an old sportsman. The same evening he spent five pounds on a sandal wood box in which to send the gloves to the lady; and with the rest of the money given him in such a delicate manner by his unknown friend he gave a supper to a few intimate friends!

How weak is man in resisting his vicious instincts when he is not sustained by divine grace which habits of sin have expelled from his soul!

IV.

AT the foot of the maritime Alps in Lombardy, a famous spring of medicinal waters bursts forth beside a rock at the bottom of a ravine. It is reached by a rugged path and the numerous invalids who expect to find in those waters a remedy for all their ailments descend on donkeys, or are carried on litters.

On the left from the heights, Monza, the ancient capital of Lombardy, may be discovered, while on the right lies the road to Monaco—'*la corbeille de fleurs*,'—which hides beneath its leaves a venomous serpent and which has covered its gardens with the tombs of unhappy creatures driven to commit suicide: the 'roulette' of Baden—Baden, expelled from Germany, has established its kingdom in that diminutive principality.

By the side of the spring, wise speculators have built a fine hotel or sanatorium in which the invalid visitor may find every luxury and comfort for his body ; a magnificent ball-room and a roulette table for his amusement, but no chapel in which to beg God's mercy and to prepare for that other world whither he is hastening !

How sad to watch those human forms—many soon to be rigid in death—whirling rapidly to the sound of gay music ! How horrible to see those thin hands stretched out to wager large sums which ought to be inserted in their wills !

Among the honest and honorable people who come there to take the waters, mix some opulent gamblers of the Monaco Club, and some of those other gamblers and swindlers who abound, like rats in search of offal, round the gaming tables. All languages are spoken there, all coins are current ; all crimes are committed, every sorrow is known. . . . There also at intervals comes death, to search in that quagmire of disease and vice and to drag out of this world a soul, which will fall into the hands of

the living God ; and still the dancing, and the gambling, and the suffering continue.

In August, 18,— I arrived at this famous hotel in company with an invalid Father who had been sent there to drink the waters. The latter had retired to rest earlier than usual one evening, and I was about to write some letters in an adjoining room. I had not yet begun my task when there was a hurried knock at the door ; it was a servant who had come to beg me to assist a dying man. I only waited to take up my crucifix, and followed the woman through the many corridors.

“And is he really dying?” I asked on the way.

“I think he is already dead,” she answered in the most natural manner. “This morning he asked me to fetch him a priest he had noticed at the spring, and I forgot to do so. This evening I went in to see if he wanted anything and he couldn’t answer me. . . . ‘Madonna mia’! what a fright I got, to see him lie

there looking at the ceiling with his mouth open !. . . ”

I understood that this was not the moment to reproach the woman as she deserved; I merely quickened my steps and asked again :

“ But what did the doctor say ? ”

“ Oh, the doctor has not seen him, signor, The man has not come to drink the waters, he comes to the roulette-table. . . . He is a poor fellow that only pays three liras. . .

We soon reached the top floor and my guide stopped before a half-opened door; there she left me saying she must go and inform the proprietor in order that the corpse of the man; whose death was not yet verified, might be removed before morning. I therefore went in alone; it was a wretched room with only a deal table and two chairs and a kind of camp bed. On this lay a man who breathed with difficulty; his eyes were closed, and one hand white and delicate as a woman's appeared from under the bed-clothes tightly grasping some shabby, greasy garments with which he had probably tried to dress himself. By the light of a candle I

examined his features on which death had already stamped his seal ; he was a man of about forty, and spite of the pallor of death I distinctly saw those red and purple marks that denote alcoholic habits. This did not discourage me, however ; I immediately thought that the man might be vicious and even criminal, but certainly not impious or atheist. The fact of his having asked for a priest revealed a remnant of faith, which makes an abyss between formal impiety and mere libertinage.

At first I moved him gently and then more rudely ; I spoke to him in every language I knew for I was ignorant which was his. But the dying man remained motionless and insensible, his eyes closed and his mouth half open, his labored breathing like the fearful death-rattle, and his heart beating rapidly and unevenly like a watch spending a broken spring.

It was impossible to give him the last Sacraments, for the nearest church, at Roccabruna, was more than an hour's journey down a rugged mountain side. Taking into consideration, however, that the

unfortunate man's petition for a priest was sufficient proof of his desire to reconcile himself with God, I raised my hand and gave him conditional absolution. I afterwards placed my crucifix upon his breast and then sat at the bedside, unable to assist him otherwise than by moistening his parched lips from time to time with my handkerchief which I wetted in a jug of water.

Thus two hours passed by. In the distance, I could hear the gay music of the dance and at my side the heavy faltering breathing of the unknown man. At last I began to feel the effects of the foul air of that miserable little room and I opened the window to inhale a little fresh air. On the other side of the court yard I could see the open windows of the gaming-room, and under the green shades of the lamps I could distinguish the anxious faces of the players as they bent over the roulette table and the heaps of gold upon it.

A sharp grating sound just then came from the bed, and I hastened thither; I thought the dying man was scratching the wall. I found him however in exactly

the same posture, immovable as I had left him. The same horrible noise, which sent a shudder through me, sounded again ; the poor creature was grinding his teeth. . . .

The piano still sounded in the distance, and now a powerful contralto voice was singing an air from some opera. My heart was so oppressed with horror at the whole scene that I could not restrain my tears, and obeying a sudden impulse I approached the crucifix to those dying lips before me ; alas ! they were still motionless.

At two o'clock in the morning the dying man raised his head a moment and blood oozed from his mouth ; a few minutes later he was in his last agony. I then knelt down at his side and began the prayers for the agonizing. On reaching the words :—*Redemptorem tuum facie ad faciem videas*,—Thou shalt see thy Redeemer face to face,—the man gave a violent jerk ; he opened his eyes ; seemed to look at me with a fright ; then his arm and head fell back violently, and he was dead. . .

A shudder of horror ran through me and

I could hardly murmur the prayers to the end.

When I had really finished I called the chamber-maid, and soon after the manager came too, accompanied by the doctor and two men.

Guessing the repulsive scene which would take place, I retired to the room to pray for the soul of the nameless dead.

Soon I heard a door open beneath my window ; it led from the back of the hotel into the country ; and by the pale light of the dawn I saw two men leading a donkey with a large bundle wrapped in a dirty sheet fastened across its back.

They were taking the unknown corpse to the distant cemetery of Roccabruna.

The same evening the proprietor of the hotel came to me and begged me to translate into Italian some Spanish letters he had found in the dead man's valise. "He was a Spanish forger," he said. "See what we found in a double bottom to his portmanteau." And he showed me some plates for printing counterfeit notes on the Banks of Turin, and Spain.

I looked at the envelopes of the letters, and saw with indescribable dismay and grief that they were directed to Manolo. . . .

It then occurred to me to write this story and dedicate it to certain fathers of families.

A MIRACLE.

"I will bless those places where an image or picture of my Heart is placed."

(Words of Our Lord to the B. Margaret Mary.)

. A FEW years ago an Italian diplomatist related to the writer the following curious case. A certain sceptical foreigner, celebrated too in more senses than one, was visiting the Eternal City. Conversing one day with a Roman cardinal, he mentioned his doubts concerning the canonization of the saints, censuring the—in his opinion—culpable facility with which the Catholic Church approves the infinite number of miracles attributed to them.

"Have you ever read a process of canonization?" asked the cardinal.

"I have never even seen one."

"Well, read that which I will send you," replied the cardinal smiling.

A few hours afterwards the critic received a voluminous in-folio which he read with avidity. On returning it to the cardinal, he wrote : " If all the processes of canonization are conducted like this one, I have no further difficulty in believing in the virtues of the saints or in the truth of their miracles."

The cardinal wrote in reply : " The process of canonization which seems so satisfactory to you did not equally satisfy the exactions of the Catholic Church. It was rejected some years ago."

This example is that of all unbelievers : their state is one of simple pride and ignorance. When the former humbles itself the latter is vanquished, and the splendors of the light of faith will shine in the soul of the sceptic, unless indeed his negations be dictated by malice.

Unfortunately, malice and bad faith are the characteristic features of dangerous unbelievers. Some are such by profession : that is to say, unbelievers who proclaim aloud their principles because modern

philosophy teaches them that credulity is synonymous with stupidity, instead of its being as we believers maintain a proof of soundness of mind. This class is composed partly of those numerous fools who imagine they increase their intellectual stature by their scepticism; and partly of the equally numerous libertines who boldly deny all dogma, all morality, all miracle, that rebukes their vices or checks their ambition. With the first "I do not believe" is equivalent to—"I do not understand:" with the second "I do not believe" means—"it does not suit me to believe, or I fear to believe."

The one and the other form the rank and file—the rabble—of impiety.

It is not this class however which is the most dangerous; there are other unbelievers who may be termed the aristocracy of impiety, the scientific, serious men of their army.

These never join in the noisy outcry of the mob, who find the idea of a personal God too antiquated for our age of progress and enlightenment. They, on the

contrary, have taken Him under their protection : they have re-established his throne of glory which musty superstition was undermining ; and, with truly human munificence, they have granted him Angels to honor him with the music of their golden harps, and even thunder and lightning for his amusement.

They have done more : jealous of the dignity of that God who condescends to feed the birds of the air and to clothe the lilies of the field, they have framed for him a constitution, which casts down that old and modest regimen called—Providence. God no longer intervenes in the things of this world : reclining on the wings of the seraphim, he counts the stars in the—*via lactea*—, while these restorers of his honor proclaim in college and university the—Constitutional God—of sensible men, enemies of superstition, and—Oh, zeal of the house of God that devours them !—for the good of religion and all rational belief, they abandon to public scorn the absurd miracles which are authorized, either through ignorance or debility, by the

Catholic Church, who in other respects is a loving mother and worthy of all esteem.

So speaks a certain Academician in a speech which overthrows the sharp remark of a witty author : " Fools differ from men of talent in this, that the former talk absurdities while the latter act them." Here is a man of talent,—for being an Academician one must naturally suppose him such—uttering the most absurd and contradictory arguments. For that public ridicule, to which this submissive son of the Church would hold up the miracles that his spiritual mother approves, is malicious in thought and ignorant in speech : it is a kind of '*enfant terrible*' that exposes the upright, pious and holy intentions of this protector of religion and rational belief. He, in his great wisdom, has discovered ignorance and weakness in the conduct of the Church. It is difficult to imagine such calumny to spring from good faith ; but taking the latter for granted, his great love for this holy and infallible Mother causes him to draw down upon her public scorn ; simply and solely through kindness !! for the good of

the faith, of which she is the sole depository!! What are we to conclude? Our only conclusion is this, that notwithstanding his deep oriental studies our Academician has not learnt this beautiful Arabian proverb: "When a stain appears on the rich carpet of Stamboul, the wise man covers it with his mantle; the fool points it out with his finger."

We can only suppose that, in searching the Scriptures, he never remarked that the two good sons of Noah covered his shame; he who made fun of it was Cham the cursed!

This might be surely enough; it was not necessary, in order to reveal his ends, that this loving son of the Church who calumniates and scoffs at his Mother should add the following phrase to his speech:

"No modern thaumaturgus has ever shown me a dead man brought to life: when he brings me one I will believe in his miracles."

Ah, sir Academician! if one were to rise from the grave and knock at your door, the news that he might bring for you from the eternal dwellings would perhaps be anything but agreeable! . . .

And yet the dead do rise to life in the light of this nineteenth century, just as they rose by the rays of the Roman lamps in the Church of the Catacombs. We ourselves have seen one rise from his bier at the bidding of some mysterious voice; the first act of his awakening intelligence was to recognize his father; the first impulse of his heart was to cast himself in his paternal arms. If we had not been believers already we should have become so!

This is the story we are about to relate, not to those protectors of the constitutional God of men of common sense, but to the partisans of the old régime who allow God to weigh and measure the actions of men; to the humble, nourished by faith; to the simple, so ready to believe because they are incapable of falsehood; to the lovers of the Sacred Heart, whose souls expand and rejoice at seeing how faithfully Our Lord keeps the promise that serves as an epigraph to these lines.

At first sight Philip appeared to belong to the ordinary class of young men, but his character when studied attentively proved

to be of an original type rarely met with in youth. A lover of sport, an indefatigable dancer in fashionable circles, familiar with drawing-room intrigues and theatrical gossip, he seemed to be one of the many frivolous youths whom pleasure enslaves with chains of flowers. Nevertheless, the passions proper to youth were not the only ones that held captive this mind of no ordinary mould; above all and before all that other passion, which the Holy Scripture calls *putredo ossium* (rotten to the bone), was deeply rooted therein. An insatiable ambition, more general among men of riper years.

At the age of twenty-two, when we made his acquaintance, Philip had already his fixed projects for the future; he had always an object in view, and with cool calculation and profound reserve, making everything subordinate to his egotism, he went straight towards it with the slow activity of prudence; with the tenacious constancy of an iron will which does not consist in repeating always the same acts but in directing them all to the same end. His natural talent, his polished manners and above all

his precocious knowledge of men due to a natural gift of keen observation, rarely met with in men of his age, made his path easy. To him, both men and things were as so many chessmen which he moved backwards or forwards according as they favored his game, a simple visit, a waltz, an invitation made or accepted, were with Philip the result of reflection and prevision.

There was one thing only that he never reflected upon: that he possessed an immortal soul.

In September, 187—, a lady, a friend of our hero, Widow Z——, arrived in Madrid, and he hastened to pay her his respects. This lady had just returned from England, and she brought a message from the nuns of the Sacred Heart in York for the Superioress of the Convent of the same order at Chamarsin de la Rosa, close to Madrid. She begged Philip to accompany her to the convent; this he gladly consented to do, for he remembered that one of the pupils in the boarding school was the daughter of a (grandee) nobleman whose patronage he

greatly desired to secure, and he saw in this visit a favorable opportunity of ingratiating himself with the father by showing attention and politeness to the daughter. Philip had never come in contact with a nun; when the superioress, therefore, made her appearance in the reception-room he fixed his eyes upon her with great curiosity. Her stately, but withal modest, bearing, and the graceful ease with which she bowed to her visitors, an air of refinement impossible to escape the notice of so keen an observer as Philip, made him say to himself directly, even before she spoke. . . . "She is a perfect lady, at any rate."

He was not, however, a man to judge by appearances; for though the nun spoke French with the purest Parisian accent, and saluted her guests with the stateliness of an Infanta, Philip looked for something more than all this under that religious habit, and he found it. He found a serene gravity that he had only seen in sacred pictures; an ingenuous affability that commanded his respect; a something which, spite of his sagacity, he was unable to define, but which

was simply the aroma of the virtues that adorned her soul.

"I have no doubt she is a saint," thought Philip, and seized with bashfulness for the first time in his life, he dared not ask to see the daughter of his friend.

The Superioress asked her visitors to inspect the convent school and related the story of its foundation. The religious of the Sacred Heart had commissioned a friend to negotiate the purchase of the house from the Duke of Vastrana to whom it belonged; this nobleman refused to sell the property, but later on when he learned who were the would-be purchasers, and the use they intended to make of the house, he replied that he persisted in refusing to sell; but that he would willingly make the nuns a present of it. Napoleon the First had lodged here in 1808, when the indomitable energy of the inhabitants of Madrid opposed his entrance into their city.

Before taking leave of Philip and his lady friend the nun offered the latter some pictures and medals, and to the former a scapular of the Sacred Heart. Philip accepted

the little gift with unfeigned eagerness. and pressed it to his lips, then opening his elegant Russian leather card-case, he placed it between some visiting cards and letters that emitted a strong perfume of patchouli.

The good nun smiled sadly on observing the young man's worldliness, and bade him politely adieu.

III.

Two years passed by without producing any change in Philip: the present satisfied, and the future smiled upon him; his life of pleasure and intrigue absorbed his whole being.

This ambition increased in proportion as his first hopes were realized. The immediate object of his dreams was to recover the title of count, which had formerly belonged to his family, as a means of mounting still higher, but to obtain this it was necessary to pay the arrears of fine and duty, and the small revenue of the ambitious youth was quite unequal to such an expenditure. To obviate this difficulty Philip had secured the confidence of a certain politician, a newly created count; and with the intention of pressing forward the negotiations, he determined to spend the spring in the populous town of X—where this important person-

age was staying. This latter was one of those vulgar men, whom the prevision of others more sagacious raises to high posts, in order that they may serve as a screen to their low intrigues. Philip, who always found in the weakness of others, powerful aids in attaining his own ends, had studied the weak points in the Count's character and in a short time had gained his confidence.

He set out therefore for X—, taking with him a strange object for a man of his stamp—the little Scapular of the Sacred Heart, given him by the Superioress of the Convent at Chamarsin. It had passed into letter-cases of all shapes and sizes but had never left Philip's pocket since the day he had accepted it from the nun.

For that man who never murmured a prayer, that man who never raised his thoughts to heaven, and could not understand why this world should be called a valley of tears, nevertheless could not bring himself to cast aside the image of his Saviour's Heart, though the flames that burst from it did not set his cold heart on fire,

and whose precious blood he despised. Why he kept it on his person, he himself ignored. God alone knew the reason.

One night Philip went to the theatre to hear Gounod's famous opera "Faust." The diva was doing wonders; no one had ever interpreted with sweeter fioritures or more intricate vocalization the rôle of Goethe's heroine.

Thousands of souls redeemed by the blood of Christ, were throwing flowers and jewels at the feet of that despicable woman whose merit consisted in making vice appear attractive and immorality delightful.

Philip was no appreciator of music but it was correct to appear so, and after bursting his gloves with applauding and making himself hoarse with crying bravo! at the end of the third act he went up to the box of his friend the bran-new count. The enthusiasm there was indescribable, the young countess had just thrown a bouquet of early violets, in which she had placed a diamond ring at the feet of the diva. Even the grave old count had relaxed his usual frown of self importance and evoking his reminis-

cences of musical knowledge, exclaimed in the height of his enthusiasm.

—That voice is as soft and mellow as— but here his Excellency stopped short, the muse refusing any further inspiration. The countess, a placid matron who went to sleep during the andantes and woke up for the allegros, had contented herself with giving a nod of approval now and then.

“Philip!” screamed the young Countess, the moment he entered the box. “Have you ever heard anything to equal her? What a voice! What an artist! What vocalization! and at the same time what perfect acting! And what a lovely costume! That low, square body is *une gracieuse création!* that will set the fashion! . . . What a pity that merit is never recognized in Spain!

“Excuse me, Mariquita,” interrupted Philip; “such an ovation as she has received here to-night the diva will rarely meet with elsewhere.”

“It is not half enough,” screamed the enthusiastic young lady. “We must make her a regal gift, if we do not want the civil-

ized world to laugh at us! The set of diamonds that was offered to Bribonini in Paris on the night of her benefit cost two thousand pounds! . . . We must open a subscription at once. . . . Papa, you must head the list with a hundred pounds, and Mamma another hundred. . . .

At this the Count knitted his brows as though the peace of Europe were threatened, and the Countess roused herself so effectually that sleep fled from her eyes for the rest of the evening.

"Oh, you are both going to refuse of course!" rattled on the daughter; pouting like a spoilt child. "What is the paltry sum of a hundred pounds? Aren't you soon to be a minister, Papa?"

The Count smiled with the serene majesty of Jupiter Olympus; and thus encouraged, the girl continued.

"That voice is worth all the gold in the world, and since money is spent on other things, why not on this? . . . Why, Mamma gave five pounds, and I one yesterday, merely for a Novena!

"Yes, it must be done, let us open the

subscription at once! . . . Papa a hundred pounds; Mamma a hundred; I will give the twenty that Papa gave me on my birthday. . . . Philip, you must give another twenty at least Come, give me your pocket-book, I shall make the list myself." . . .

Bedinned with all this chatter, Philip took out his pocket-book and was handing it mechanically to the young lady, when he suddenly remembered that it contained the Scapular of the Sacred Heart. Quick as thought and with the dexterity of a prestidigitator he took it out before giving her the pocket book. Then, letting it fall unobserved, he pushed it with his foot under one of the seats. He feared the mockery of that indevout, and brainless girl if she should perceive a Scapular in the pocket-book of so fashionable a young man; he dreaded above all that the foolish ignorance and perverse ideas of the Count might be alarmed, if he saw him the possessor of that pious emblem at which the reactionary party scoffed and sneered. Spite of these fears however, he had no sooner trodden the

little Scapular under his feet than a feeling of shame and disgust took possession of him ; it seemed as though he had been a traitor to his best friend.

“I will pick it up again,” he thought. But though he tried several times to do so, he did not succeed, for in his hurry he could not distinguish the little piece of colored stuff from the patterns on the carpet. At the end of the last act he was obliged to offer his arm to the Countess and conduct her to her carriage. He had no sooner seen it drive off than he returned to the theatre, which now dark and deserted, presented the aspect of the soul when the brilliant phantasma, of temptation have vanished, leaving it alone in the bitter darkness of sin.

Philip went up to the box, and by the light of several matches searched in all the corners for his Scapular, but in vain. The long trains of those worldly women had no doubt swept away the sacred image of the Heart of Christ !

Vexed, and grieved, Philip returned to the hotel where he was staying.

IV.

THE salutary impression did not last long however: for although Philip was far from being frivolous, his heart was too full of weeds for the lily of a holy thought to flourish there. The remembrance of his lost scapular had nevertheless often come to his mind.—Who will give me another? he would then say, with a certain tone of sadness.

One evening, according to custom, our hero went down to dinner at the 'table-d'hôte'. To an observant mind like his, the continual movement proper to large hotels was quite a study: that multitude of types, differing in sex, in age, etc., in class and in language, offered a wide field for his observations. But it had never occurred to him to compare that constant traffic with the equally incessant traffic of human life. Man arrives at the gates of life as a traveller; he rests

awhile, pays what is due, and departs never to return! Philip never made this reflection, however.

His daily vis-a-vis at table was a rich North American lady who was travelling through Europe. Mrs. W—— was a zealous and devout Catholic, somewhat advanced in years, but whose white hairs betokened experience and commanded respect. One of those acquaintanceships so frequently formed in hotel life soon sprung up between this lady and Philip. On the evening in question, Mrs. W., who was to leave on the morrow, invited Philip to take tea with her in her rooms. Not wishing to be rude, the latter consented; but he took leave of the old lady as soon as good breeding would permit in order to hurry to the theatre, where the Count had arranged to meet him.

Mrs. W——, accompanied him to the door of her apartment, and offering him a sealed envelope, said—"I am leaving you a little memento which I am sure you will keep, and take great care of."

Philip, impatient to keep his appointment,

rushed up to his room grumbling at the polite attention of good Mrs. W—., and throwing the envelope on a table without even looking at it, rapidly changed his dress and hurried off to the theatre. The Count was anxiously expecting him. He had that morning received a letter from a Cabinet Minister, charging him with a Mission quite beyond his mean capacity, and he hoped to find secrecy and aid in the talent of Philip. The minister added in a postscript, that the affair concerning our hero's ancient title was one of slight difficulty, that by a little irregularity he would soon be in possession of it without expense.

The Count naturally began by reading the postscript, and ended by proposing Philip's co-operation in the business that concerned himself. The young man showed no eagerness to accept ; for, cool and sagacious as ever, he had immediately remarked his present advantageous position and resolved to profit by it. Quite taken by surprise, the inexperienced politician found himself obliged to accede to all Philip's demands, and the contract was at last agreed

to, with protestations of paternal friendship on the part of the elder Count, and generous disinterestedness on that of the younger.

At twelve o'clock the latter returned to his hotel more pleased and satisfied than he had ever been ; his hands in his pockets, he walked home humming the air of *Derdemon*a that he had just heard at the theatre, and bearing on his head the immortal pitcher of the milkmaid that men will never cease breaking.

On entering his room he lighted a candle that was on the table, and there at its side he saw the envelope that Mrs. W—— had given him three hours before. Moved by curiosity, he determined to open it ; he tore open the envelope, and to his utter surprise, saw a Scapular exactly like the one he had lost. Red as a stain of blood, the Heart stood out in relief on the strip of white flannel, and under it the same inscription met his gaze—'Cease: the Heart of Jesus is here!' Philip, stood for a moment voiceless and motionless: then little by little his breast heaved, and a tremendous sob,

resembling the roar of a wounded lion, burst from his lips: presently he fell upon his knees, pressing the Scapular between his trembling fingers, and hid his face in an arm chair. A sharp pain pierced his heart, and a sensation of anguish came up into his throat as though he were choking. Philip thought he was going to die, and between his pressed lips he groaned

“Not now, my God, not now! . . .
Give me only one hour longer! . . . ”

Hour after hour slipped by, yet that immense pain kept revolving in Philip's bosom, seeking like an enraged beast to escape; only now and then he uttered short sobs; hoarse, without tears, dry, like thunder without clouds or rain. A flood of tears at last burst from his eyes and relieved his oppressed bosom. The waves of bitterness gradually subsided and gave place to a more peaceful grief, though it was deep as the sea in its calmest moments. Memory then brought to his mind the innumerable sins of his life; reflection made him see their great enormity, but his will,—the cowardly will, man's queen and mistress, so daring for

evil, and so feeble for good,—was all but failing him.

“I cannot! I cannot!” groaned the unhappy youth. “For me, pardon is impossible!”

And the worm of remorse, taking in his conscience the proportions of a viper, was killing the sweet and holy virtue of hope in that soul. At this moment his imagination distinctly represented to him a resplendant heart surrounded by a crown of thorns; it had a large wound in the upper part and not in the lower part as is usually represented, from which burst forth flames. A bright-winged butterfly was flying round and round those flames, and at last disappeared within the open wound, drawn in and consumed by that divine fire. Then a vivid light shone in his understanding, and Philip understood that the sinner is the vile worm, repentance the cocoon in which it encloses itself, and holy pardon the beautiful wings that elevate the soul even to the Heart of its Saviour. Down in the depths of his soul he seemed to hear those touching words of the Prodigal Son—which he

had yet never heard or read: *Surgam et ibo ad patrem meum*. "I will arise and go to my father."

And Philip did arise. The day was now beginning to dawn; it found him still in evening dress, his scented kid gloves on his hands, and two or three violets that the count's daughter had given him, still in the button-hole of his coat. All this he hastened to change for a simple morning suit, and then directed his steps to the cathedral. The vast temple was empty, but the rosy light of the dawn penetrating the eastern windows lent to the majestic roof that tint of divine sublimity which makes us involuntarily bend the knee and brings spontaneously to our lips the praises of God. Philip knelt down close to an empty confessional. A statue of Our Lady of Dolours with a sword piercing her heart happened to be before him.

"It is I who have wounded thee thus!" he exclaimed, in bitter sorrow. "How can I call thee Mother? . . . Nevertheless, Mother! Mother! I call upon thee, I implore thy intercession!" Sweet, comfort-

ing tears then flowed, and it seemed as he invoked the Blessed Mother of God that she promised him pardon even before that pardon were assured by holy absolution.

After some time a priest appeared in one of the aisles. Philip rose immediately and begged him to hear his confession. The priest was about to excuse himself, but on remarking the young man's haggard, anxious look, his eyes red and swollen with weeping, and the expression of anguish with which he gazed on him, he bowed a silent assent and entered the confessional. Philip knelt at his feet and made a general confession of his whole life.

The confessor was amazed at such profound sorrow—such an efficacious purpose of amendment, and he could not refrain from asking tenderly ;

“What moved you to come to confession, my son? . . .”

“The sight of this scapular,” replied Philip, showing it all wet with his tears.

“Had you any reverence for it? . . . Did you practice any devotion in its honor?”

“No, none whatever! I merely wore it on

my person. . . . Once I threw it away, but it came to seek me again spite of my ingratitude."

"Our Lord has fulfilled his promise!" exclaimed the priest, lifting his hands to heaven: "I will bless those places where an image of my Heart shall be found! . . ."

* * * * *

Two years after this Philip died in a foreign land; looking at death face to face as the threshold of eternal life, he died the death of the just.

Among his frequent conversations with the religious who nursed him in his illness, he related the preceding story, which can be fully verified with exact dates and the names of well-known persons.

V.

AND is this a resurrection from the dead? Yes! It is the resurrection of a dead soul, a miracle far surpassing that of raising a dead body; for, if the latter requires the intervention of God's almighty power, the former necessitates all His power and all His mercy as well.

No physiologist can explain this phenomenon, it is beyond the comprehension of psychologists, and the most profound observer of the human heart can never understand it. At times the reading of a good book, the word of God heard in a church, death, that warns with its terrible memento, regret, awakened by the remembrance that this earth is not our true country, disappointment and deception, which poison our earthly joys; each and all may seem, to those who never penetrate beneath the surface, the natural causes of those mar-

vellous changes of the heart that converted Saul the persecutor into Paul the great Apostle, and Mary the sinner into the penitent Magdalen. But that a man who lives in utter forgetfulness of God and his soul, enslaved by all the passions of youth, and at the same time by an insatiable ambition—perhaps the most dangerous passion of riper years,—that a man, whom the present caresses and whose future smiles with promise, should suddenly renounce all his pleasures and schemes of aggrandizement and embrace austere penance; should stifle in himself his former vices, and practice spontaneously all the virtues only because he finds a scapular in an envelope, this is a more than human prodigy; it is because the voice that cried to Lazarus—*Exi foras!* to make him come forth from his sepulchre, that divine voice has sounded too in the ears of that dead soul:—“Believe, for it is I who speak to thee! Hope, for I alone am thy hope and trust! Love, for I have first loved thee! Live, for my will is that thou shouldst live for me only!” Thus, and thus only can we explain why this invisible

Lazarus should rise from the tomb of vice,
and, cleansed and purified, cast himself at
the feet of Jesus Christ.

CAIN.

At the close of a beautiful day in May, 1869, a man of advanced years was journeying along the rocky road that leads from Yerez to Puerto Santa Maria on the Spanish Coast.

He was driving a donkey on which was seated a middle aged woman who was weeping bitterly. Her head was covered with the bright kerchief worn by Catalan peasants, and with the corners she kept wiping her tears. The same grief, repressed, but perhaps on that account more terrible, might have been read on the face of the man: he walked along with bent head, turning in his hands the stick with which he

drove the donkey, and at times a bitter tear ran down his cheek and fell upon his beard, white with age or sorrow. He would then, as if he wished to dissimulate his sorrow, give a smart blow to the donkey, saying sharply: "Gee up, lazy bones! you walk like people in a procession." At this the beast would prick up its ears and quicken its step; but in a few minutes it returned to its slow march, with drooping ears, which it shook from time to time, and lowered head, as though it shared the melancholy of its owners. For a long time the latter journeyed on in silence, until the man, in the weary tones of one who seeks to hide some great trouble by speaking of indifferent things, said, pointing to a garden off the road side planted with melons and tomatoes:

"How thriving John Pita's cucumber bed looks!"

The woman did not raise her head or answer a word, as though anything but her own sad thoughts were void of interest to her. Just then, a man carrying two large baskets of tomatoes came out from a hut

above the melon beds, and, jumping the ditch that separated the orchard from the road, stopped before our travellers. It was John Pita in person.

"The Lord guard you and your companion 'Señor Miguel'!" he exclaimed with a bow.

"Hullo! John;" answered Miguel. "Are you going to Puerto?"

"No, Sir, I am going to Yerez to sell these tomatoes which will be the first in the market."

"Well, I can't say as much, for those in my orchard will get eaten up by the soldiers."

"But mine are early ones, and I shall sell them dear to rich folks that must have the first of the season."

"And how much will you ask for them?"

"Well, these that are still greenish, for five pence, and the others that are nice and ripe for tenpence."

"What! tenpence for those tomatoes that are only fit to fatten pigs on? . . . It seems to me John that you are not troubled with a tender conscience."

"Well, I must make a little money 'Señor Miguel;' with the price of my tomatoes this year I mean to get a donkey."

"I wouldn't have a donkey on my conscience."

"Oh! those are your devotee's scruples, 'Señor Miguel.' Before I took to gardening, I was a lawyer, and I learnt to reckon and calculate in more ways than one." And John Pita smiled knowingly and pointed over his left shoulder.

"Isn't that true, 'Señora Joaquina'?" he added. "Why you sit there as silent as a post and as pompous looking on your donkey as if you were in a picture."

Joaquina turned her head, and John then remarked the expression of deep grief depicted on her face.

"Zounds!" he exclaimed stopping short before her. "What is the matter with you? your eyes are as red as my best tomatoes!"

Joaquina's tears burst forth anew, and Miguel kept silence again.

"But whatever has happened, 'Señor Miguel'?" John Pita asked again. "What has happened?"

"What should have happened?" broke out Joaquina at last between her sobs. "Why my Perico, my darling, my eldest, the son of my heart, has been drawn for a soldier, and to-day they are taking him to Cadiz!" . . .

"The Lord bless us! 'Señora.' . . . And I knew nothing about it," responded John mournfully.

"My son, my son!" continued the woman weeping. "Never did I think that he would have to leave his home and roam over the world. Such a delicate boy as he is, and such care as I always took of him! God bless him and save him! This will be the death of him and I shall never see him again."

"Don't talk like that, wife, it's tempting Providence; the lad has more wits than a mule!"—exclaimed Miguel abruptly. And turning to John Pita he added—"You see, my wife has got it into her head that something must happen to the boy, and she has been fretting for weeks over this affair, and making him apprehensive too."

"Hold your tongue now, Miguel," replied

Joaquina ; “you know very well that I am right, only you keep your thoughts and troubles to yourself. . . . Ah ! what a bitter cup we have to drink in our later years !” the unhappy woman went on lamenting. “What will become of we two old folks without our Perico, who is our support and comfort ?”

“Come now, ‘Señora Joaquina,’ it is not so bad as all that !” said John Pita. “Ever since Adam sinned men have had to serve the King, and they came back all the same for that ; and between whiles you’ve got yet your son Roch, who is a strong, healthy lad.”

A sad smile parted the lips of Miguel and gave to his contracted features a still more sorrowful expression.

“Roch !” he murmured bitterly ; “no one’s troubles but his own will ever move him !”

“That’s another thorn in my poor heart !” exclaimed Joaquina in grief and anger at the same time : “the dislike you have for your son Roch, and the hard looks and rough words that you always have for him.”

"It is not dislike, wife," gravely answered Miguel; "but my fatherly affection does not blind me; I can see that that lad has a bad heart."

"My poor boy!" sighed Joaquina. What would you, too, do without your fond Mother? I love them all alike, I have no preferences."

"Neither have I any preferences; but I know what each is worth . . . Would you believe, John, that that hard hearted Roch never took on a bit when he heard that his brother had to go for a soldier; he never shed a tear when he saw him leave his home, and, instead of coming with his mother and I to see him off and bid him good-bye, he stayed at home as cool as a cucumber, lying on the bench at the door to sleep in the shade."

"But, husband, was he to leave the house and the orchard all alone?" replied Joaquina, who, like all mothers, ever tried to excuse the faults of her children.

"He knows well how to do that when it is to go amusing himself in the town, where he has learnt too much roguery . . . I

tell you the lad has a bad heart, Joaquina, and he will cause us many tears yet."

The mother held her peace, as though she understood the truth of her husband's remarks. The latter took a red cotton handkerchief from his pocket, lifted his hat, and pretended to wipe his brow, but in reality it was to wipe the tears that started to his eyes.

"Gee up now, Molinera, gee up, we shall soon have night upon us," he said, urging on the donkey.

Meanwhile, John Pita,—either because he found himself in the uncomfortable position which a third person always feels between those who are absorbed in their mutual grief, or with the innate delicacy that feels that the conversation has taken a turn where any listener becomes an intruder,—profiting by the silence which followed Miguel's observation, took his leave, and went a short cut towards Yerez, where he hoped to sell his stock of tomatoes.

The unhappy parents continued their way in silence; no sound was heard but the footsteps of Miguel and Molinera, and a half-

suppressed sob now and then from Joaquina, or the occasional tinkling of goats' bells, and in the distance the voice of John Pita singing as he went along with the indifference so general in those who have no troubles towards those whose hearts are full of sadness.

Miguel and Joaquina journeyed on thus and passed without notice the two tall columns called "las Cruces," placed on either side of the road, and which serve to mark the first league from Yerez to Puerto. From this spot a path branched off, which Molinera instinctively took. It crossed an arid moor, covered with wild herbs and thorny bushes, among which some old black walls were visible, like an enormous skeleton coming out of a grave. It was the tomb that time had made for the great Castle of Sidueñas. This was once an imposing fortress with eight large towers. It is generally believed that the Queen of Castille, Doña Blanca de Borbon, came there to weep over the contempt and neglect of her lord, Don Pedro, the Cruel; and that, by the orders of the latter, she was there poisoned

by Juan Perez de Rebolledo, the king's mace bearer; Trigo Ortiz de Zuniga, the first keeper of the royal prisoner, having nobly refused to commit the crime. To-day, thanks to some lover of historic treasures, a portion of the ruined walls have been restored—the famous tower of Doña Blanca rising high above the moor like a monument upon the tomb of a hero. Not even a garland of ivy adorns it; severe and haughty it crowns its brow with turrets, and wears above its portals the arms of Castille and Aragon under the coronet of a marquis, for from this place the Marquises of—Castille del Valle de Sidueñas—derive their title.

On the borders of this lonely, barren moor four flourishing orchards had been planted, one of which was named Alcaide. In this, under the shade of a group of poplars, was a spring of sweet water, called by the country people, La Piedad, which, compassionate and generous as the name implies, sent forth one rivulet to fertilize the fruit gardens, and another to follow the road leading to Puerto Santa Maria. The latter stopped before a ruined hermitage, as if in

reverence for fallen greatness, or to weep over the ruins made by man, and indignant at Christian neglect ; then it continued slowly its way, leaving the hermitage alone with its ruined walls, its doorless and roofless chapel, and belfry from which both cross and bell had been torn.

II.

SEVEN years had nearly elapsed since Miguel and Joaquina had rented the orchard of Alcaide, having the tower of Doña Blanca as the farm house attached to it.

Miguel cultivated the orchard, aided by his sons, Perico and Roch, who regularly went to sell the fruit and other garden produce in the market-place of Yerez.

Perico, the elder, possessed that confiding, open-hearted nature which seems natural in youth ; happy age, in which neither fear nor mistrust is known ; in which the heart is filled with joy and gladness, and the countenance lit up with smiles.

Loving his parents almost with exaggeration—if exaggeration were possible in the holy obligation of filial love—his delight was to procure them every comfort and satisfaction in his power, and his great happiness was to see them calm and contented,

enjoying the rest due to their advancing years.

Roch, on the contrary, was full of that selfishness which is repulsive in mature age as a vice, but which shocks and grieves in the young, as something alien to their nature; and envy, which always presupposes a perverse, narrow mind—high-minded and noble characters may be rivals without being envious—gave a tinge of bitter sarcasm to his disposition. He was ambitious, even in the narrow circle of ideas and circumstances in which he moved; for our modern revolutionists in making the poor their instruments have taken from them that blessed conformity to the laws of Providence which religion and the charity of the rich had hitherto maintained in their souls, and which gave them fortitude and patience in their poverty and hope in all their afflictions.

Unhappy poor, why do you foolishly cast away the balsam that would cure your wounds? Unhappy rich, who know not how to ward off the storm, the first thunders of which are sounding in the distance, and

whose lightnings have already begun to burn and destroy! . . .

Like all ambitious and envious men, be they gentle or simple, Roch had no other confidant of his secret schemes and projects than self; for mistrust always precedes and accompanies ambition.

Miguel's life of honorable work, though poor, was peaceful. He divided his affection between his wife and children, and lived in deep content. But when Perico had attained the age of twenty the calm and happy monotony of the family life was interrupted by that dread that drives sleep from many a mother's eyes, that black cloud that settles every year over the homes of rich and poor alike, but which the money of the former will dispel, and the latter must accept, viz.: the Conscription.

Perico, in whom was centred all their hopes, the model son of devoted parents, was forced to take his turn at the urn, and, alas! drew an unlucky number! . . .

In vain did the unhappy youth try to appear calm and console his afflicted parents. He who needs consolation cannot

easily console others. The grief of those three loving hearts was the source of mutual tears, augmented and intensified by the cold indifference of Roch, who was never disturbed by his neighbors' sorrows and troubles. The violence of his grief made Perico even more affectionate and expansive. His brother, on the contrary, received the parting embrace of the poor conscript without a word of regret or affection; it was only when he saw him disappear in company with his parents that he called out brutally, "Don't come back too soon, wait till you're a grandfather!" . . .

The railway station on the day of the departure of the Conscripts presented one of those spectacles which move a charitable heart to tears; tears which bring no remedy, yet offer consolation and sympathy; for is it not a blessed thing to mourn with those that mourn?

Each Conscript was accompanied by either father, mother, sister or sweetheart; on every side resounded the lamentations of those who were so soon to be separated, mingled with words of encouragement,

advice and consolation, and protestations of eternal love and remembrance. . . . As though love were never succeeded by indifference and forgetfulness! . . .

The word most frequently repeated on all sides was that word which is rarely uttered without tears; that word, which, between those who love, never expresses joy because it always presents the idea of absence that separates,—farewell! adieu!—that word reserved for times of grief and sadness, of parting and desolation,—farewell! adieu! . . .

How many of those poor Conscripts had said it for the last time to their aged parents!

Seated in a corner of a third-class waiting room, Perico was holding his mother's hand tightly in his own, while she, with the other, kept wiping the tears that ran down her prematurely wrinkled cheeks. Miguel stood before them with his son's poor bundle of clothes in his hand; notwithstanding his efforts to show more fortitude than his wife, a great tear and a deep sigh from time to time betrayed his grief. Joaquina had

just hung a scapular of Our Lady over the shoulders of her son, and, as it contrasted with the yellow color of his recruit's jacket, it seemed to shine like a star of hope and comfort in their tribulation, and as a pledge of help and succor in their distress! . . .

"Come mother, don't be afraid, I shall get on all right, three years will soon slip away," said poor Perico, trying to smile, though his eyes kept filling with tears.

"Three whole years without seeing thee! . . . How can I help feeling afraid? . . . Who will comfort me, who will help me to bear this trial meanwhile, who will assure me that I shall see thee return as I have seen thee depart? . . . Holy Mother, what will become of my son? . . ."

"She will take care of him and watch over him, wife; don't take on so, crying won't remedy it," replied Miguel.

"Yes, yes, I confide him to her holy keeping; all my trust is in the Queen of Heaven!" devoutly sighed the poor mother. "Pray to her often, my darling boy, she is the refuge of the poor and the afflicted! . . ."

The bell announcing the approaching departure of the train at last sounded, causing so many hearts to beat with different emotions; the doors were opened and the crowd of friends and relatives followed the Conscripts on to the platform where tears began to flow faster, while lamentations and cries of farewell rent the air anew. Joaquina looks at the train as it waits but for a few moments to take up its new load, snorting like a tired monster, yet ready to start afresh on its wild career, and wishes she had the strength to detain it, she clutches her son convulsively by the arm, but the time is up, he must go; they are closing the carriage doors and calling to all to hurry to their seats. The poor mother cannot release her son from her embrace as she cries, "my son, my darling boy, farewell!" His father is weeping like a child as he embraces him on the other side and secretly slips a little sum of money into his pocket. He had hoarded it up by dint of many privations and labors, in his paternal tenderness and solicitude.

The second bell rings, and Perico, with a

breaking heart, is forced to mount before the train begins to move. Joaquina, in her eagerness to kiss him once more, mounted the footboard and clung to the door and was thrown backwards as the train moved on. She had seen him for a few moments longer, the rest mattered not. . . .

III.

ROCH, seated on a broken mill stone, was teaching various tricks to a dog, whose ears and tail he had cut from sheer love of inflicting pain.

"Here comes the Monarchy," he was saying as he held up his stick. And the dog barked and ran from side to side furiously, as though seeking something to attack.

"Here comes the Republic," said Roch, lowering the stick. Then the animal ran frisking round him, licked his hand, and laid himself quietly at his feet.

There was an expression of daring independence and insolence on the lad's face, and a brutal rudeness of manners, the outcome of the former; in the same way as a hateful sneer seems ever on the countenances of those who lead lives of refined profligacy. As he sat leaning against the wall, his hat thrown back and his unbut-

toned waistcoat showing his slovenly habits, and tormenting his unfortunate dog, he might have belonged to a family of gypsies who were discussing the comforts of life and the nothingness of human greatness as they encamped round their miserable caravan among the ruins of the castle of Sidueña.

Joaquina was sitting in the doorway picking the seeds off some ears of maize, and she could not help smiling sadly as she watched Roch's stupid interest in the tricks of the dog.

"How wrapt up you are in the animal, lad!" she said at last. "If you don't take care you will begin to bark, and get a tail, too, perhaps."

"Well, I should be a son of yours all the same."

"Yes, and when you were a little one I was proud of you, but since you have grown up and became an idle scapegrace you are only a trouble to me."

"What do I care? I just do what pleases me."

"As you make your bed so you lie on it," continued the patient mother. "It's a

shame for you all the same to be idling the hours away like that, while your father is working like a negro in the orchard."

"What does he want to work for then? If he chooses to kill himself, I can't help it."

"In a poor man's home people must work or starve; we have many to keep, but he is alone to work. It is your duty to help him."

"If he wants me to work for him, he had better go to the workhouse, they'll keep him there."

"Hold your insolent tongue! He that speaks thus of his father will come to the dogs! You learn that among your bad companions, no doubt. They will be your perdition, Roch, if you don't give them up."

"I shall just do as I please; it doesn't matter to you what friends I have or where I go."

"It matters a great deal to me; while you live under our roof and eat our bread, we have a right to warn you, and you are bound to obey."

"There, let me alone, and put your tongue in your pocket!" answered Roch, with the contemptuous disdain and looks of superiority belonging to the emancipated youths of large cities, and which evil spirit is, alas! spreading even to our villages.

"Be off with you, son of Cain! Wicked sons come to an evil end!" said Miguel, who had come up, and heard his son's last speech.

"Oh! there's going to be a sermon now! Preach away, father, it will go in at one ear and come out at the other," retorted Roch, as he turned his back on his parents, and to vex his mother still more he walked off singing, "I'm a republican! Hurra for the republicans! The republic for me!"

The poor mother went on with her work in silence, while the tears ran slowly down her cheeks, the coarse, rude selfishness of Roch was continually bringing them to her eyes; and as the memory of a beloved one is a source of perpetual sorrow when he is no more, or when he is far away, so her grief increased when she compared the bad con-

duct of Roch with that of her loving and beloved Perico.

"He will come back to me!" she whispered, and the hope comforted and sustained her.

Absorbed in these painful reflections, Joaquina had not noticed a tall, bony man come hurriedly up the hill and stop just before her.

"Health and fraternity!" he called out bluntly.

"Gracious goodness!" exclaimed Joaquina, with a start; "What a fright you gave me!"

"Am I so ugly that the sight of me frightens you?" replied the new-comer.

"Just as true is it that you've only got to show your nose to startle honest folk, as it is that the hiccoughs can be stopped by a sudden start."

Joaquina was not exaggerating; the man wore the look of a clown dressed up in a frock coat. He was a thorough type of a socialist agitator; a propagator of light, who only darkens the intelligence of people, whom they deceive for their own aggrandisement.

That vulgar, stupid looking face, those squinting eyes, that seemed to turn inwards at times as though practicing the—*nosce te ipsum* of the ancients; that long, dirty coat, in guise of the Roman toga; that red, green and white neck-tie—the colors of the republic, but a base republic—and, above all, the tremendous stick on which he leant with the same air of security as a peaceful citizen leaning upon—"the rights of the individual"—portrayed exactly the federal orator, who does not expose his views and arguments, but imposes them upon his ignorant hearers. He was the friend of Roch, whom the mother dreaded; the Mephistopheles who imbued him with dangerous ideas, who persuaded him to rob his father of his hard earnings—"for the country's cause," and which entered his deep pockets like stones in a well, never to return.

It was not surprising therefore that Joaquina should have received his visit much as she would that of his Satanic majesty.

"What evil wind has brought you here again with your hungry looking neck-tie?" she said.

"The good of the country," answered the man in a pompous tone.

"Well, you won't find it here, we can do very well without the benefits you would get us."

"Madame," exclaimed the federalist, impatiently, "stop your foolish talk and tell me where to find your son Roch; it is he I came to see."

"Roch has gone to the town to sell some fruit, and he won't be back till night," replied Joaquina, with the ready lie of a diplomatist.

"Well, I'll wait for him, even till to-morrow."

"Wait then, sitting or standing, just as you please," and Joaquina rose from her seat, in vexation, and went to drive her hens and chickens into their stable.

Meanwhile, the man walked up and down before the old tower, looking in every direction, and stopping at every sound, in his anxiety for the youth's return. As he did so it chanced that his eyes fell upon a marble slab above the gateway with this inscription—"the love of his ancestors and

the memory of their great deeds impelled the present Marquis to undertake the restoration of this historic monument."

"Oh! vanity of the rich, whom I so despise! . . . Not a stone of these walls will I leave one upon the other!" . . . exclaimed our federalist, parodying the hatred and proud boasting of the revengeful Media.

But his enthusiasm was cut short by a mocking laugh from Joaquina, who was just passing.

"Don't come here making fun of me!" he cried angrily.

"I was only thinking that you are like the fox and the sour grapes. Why didn't he eat them? because he couldn't get at them. Talk away, but you are not the master yet."

"Why shouldn't I stick up a coat of arms over my door too?" continued the man, pretending not to listen to her. And shaking out his shabby, greasy coat he added—"But these noble rags that cover me are worth far more than all their pompous titles."

"With your decorations included, I suppose?" retorted the irrepressible woman, pointing to a round piece of cardboard which the federalist wore on his breast.

This object which was meant to represent a medal, was inscribed on the back with the words,— "18th September" and on the outside—"Long live the sovereign people." It was hung by a narrow ribbon round his neck and worn with all the pride of a veteran.

"Yes, Madam, with my decorations included;" he answered, furiously. "This medal is a monument to me and will ever remind me of the glorious revolution and of the people's heroism."

"How fine, to be sure!" replied Joaquina sarcastically. "Well, you'd better take an umbrella with you always, or the first heavy shower will destroy your monument."

"No matter if it were destroyed, I am here to uphold its doctrines."

"Then go and preach them in some old farm where there are no people."

"When I speak, Madam, I can do as I like with the people, they flock to hear me."

"Why don't you get yourself a new frock coat and send that old gown to the rag shop?" . . . The indignant pedant was about to reply again, but he was stopped by the arrival of Roch, who was carrying a basket full of beans and followed by a flock of turkeys that kept pecking at the basket.

"Ah! Roch, my son!" shouted his friend hurrying towards him, "now let us cry 'Hurra for the Republic!'"

Cluck! cluck! cluck! cried the turkeys startled at the man's shouts.

"Comrade, the very fowls are joining in our chorus!" remarked Roch as he went with his leader to a seat behind the house.

Joaquina watched them with alarm as they began to talk in low tones and with much animation. She followed them cautiously and hid herself, at first behind a heap of straw, and then behind a broken cart, very near where they were sitting. As she listened unobserved she saw Roch raise his hands as if horrified at what the federalist was saying; while the latter, by his gestures and manner, seemed to be persuading the youth to do something repugnant to his feelings;

and she also caught the words—"The people's cause"—"Country"—"The despotism of the rich"—"Division of riches"—

"And if they send a bullet into me?" answered Roch to his arguments.

The poor mother felt a chill of horror, as if indeed that bullet had penetrated the heart of her perverse son, as she saw him at last yield to the persuasions of his leader, and heard the man say: "Well then, you will bring your father's gun and your own too?" . . .

"Yes," answered Roch with bent head and rather gloomily, as though some grave preoccupation disturbed his mind; and he said "good night" and went off to a hut in the orchard where he slept.

Joaquina dared not betray her presence and detain him; she went into the house and looked immediately in the place where her husband always hung his gun. It was not there. Miguel never took it out with him, therefore Roch must have got it. An uneasy curiosity made the poor woman walk in and out of the house without any fixed purpose; she sat down at last on the door-

step with her head in her hands and tried to think. Her imagination, excited by uncertainty, filled her heart with dread and fear.

The sun was now setting and before long the moon and stars appeared; as the shadows advanced the poor mother's anguish increased.

Miguel came in from his work, serious and taciturn as usual, ate his supper and went to bed.

When all was quiet, Joaquina went to the orchard, and crossed rapidly and silently to the spot where Roch had his hut. There was a light burning: Molinera, the donkey, was lying on her bed of dried weeds in an adjoining stable; and there, seated on a turned up basket, was Roch carefully cleaning and oiling the guns and their triggers.

IV.

"WHAT are you doing up and busy at this hour of the night?" suddenly exclaimed his mother as she entered the hut.

Roch started to his feet in alarm, letting the weapon fall from his hands, and replied in a tone of surprise and anger—"What is that to you? What do you want here?"

"Por Maria Santisima! tell me what all this means?" asked Joaquina anxiously, kicking the fallen gun.

"Go away from here, woman, or you'll make me do something desperate."

"I won't go away, I'll stay here;" cried the unhappy woman, seating herself on the basket that her son had risen from.

Without another word Roch caught her by the arm and pushed her roughly out of the hut.

"Scoundrel!—Scoundrel!"—she groaned, "I will fetch your father to you!" . . .

"Go and fetch him, I can manage you both," answered the wretch, shaking his fist at her.

"My God! my God!"—murmured the poor mother as she fled from the spot.

Miguel, who was sound asleep, did not perceive the absence of his wife, nor did he hear her re-enter the room and lie down upon the bed. She was too uneasy to undress, and grief and dread kept sleep from her eyes. The first hours of the night went slowly by, leaving fresh wrinkles on her brow and new wounds in her heart. The thought of this unknown danger, which she could not avert, tortured her beyond measure.

All at once she started up in bed so violently that she woke her husband in a fright; her listening ears had caught the sound of retreating footsteps and the distant howling of Roch's dog.

"What is the matter with you, wife, that you can't stay quiet ten minutes?" asked Miguel.

Poor Joaquina lay down again without answering, but you might have heard the

violent beating of her heart, so great was her grief and anxiety concerning her unworthy son.

Miguel was soon fast asleep again and Joaquina got up once more and crept quietly to the outer door; as she undid the bolts she heard her husband move, and the unhappy woman had to stay there quietly until he was still again, suffering meanwhile the most cruel anguish.

At last she crept out, the night was dark and black as an evil conscience; and, stumbling over planks and bushes, she flew to Roch's hut in the orchard. The light was still burning but the place was vacant.

"Roch! Roch!" called the poor mother in subdued voice and straining her eyes all round the hut.

No answer came; in the silence of the night no sound was audible but the rustle of a falling leaf which the wind made its plaything.

"Holy Mother! what has become of him?" she exclaimed as she ran round the orchard. "Holy Virgin of Miracles accom-

pany him, do not abandon him!" and again she called "Roch! Roch!" Roch! Roch! repeated the echo, like a lament.

Joaquina then ran to the road, on, as far as the old columns, calling her son; she returned to the hut, from there she went to the hermitage, then again upon the road; and still the same cruel silence and uncertainty. And thus she continued until dawn, her anguish and anxiety giving her strength and courage.

Worn out at last, she returned to the house, and laid herself again upon the bed where Miguel was still sleeping. The thought came to her anxious mind to awake him and get help in her affliction; but whether it was pity for the poor old man, or that her maternal heart could not bring itself to accuse her ungrateful son, she had the fortitude to suffer alone, and to wait until her husband had risen and gone away to his work.

She then flew to the high road once more and went towards Yerez; several women and children, pale and frightened, were coming from the city; some were carrying their

beds or clothing, others the more necessary articles of household furniture.

Joaquina enquired of them the cause of their flight, and learnt that on the previous day the troops had been fighting with the revolutionists; the firing had been suspended during the night but at dawn it had recommenced; the women told her also that a regiment had arrived from Cadiz and at that moment they were fighting with the people.

"Alas! alas! my Perico is there!" cried the wretched mother. "My sons, my two sons, face to face!" she kept repeating, as she ran like a mad woman to Yerez. She knew now that Roch must be on the barricades.

Quick as lightning she ran up the hill of "San Telmo" and hurried on to the place where the struggle was at its height; on turning a street her steps were arrested by a barricade; several peasants occupied it, some bringing munitions, others carting stones and tearing up the pavement, while the rest were standing with their guns to their shoulders, ready to fire.

"What brings you here, woman?" said one, pushing her aside.

"My sons! where are my sons?" was all she could say. Obligated to turn back, the poor creature endeavored to get back to the barricade by another street. The inhabitants of the houses, who from half open doors or shutters were watching the fighting, looked with wonder upon that breathless woman, as with bare head and streaming eyes she crossed the streets, regardless of the troops and without fear of the bullets. They knew not that she was a mother,

All at once, a woman's voice screamed out—"Joaquina!"

The unhappy mother stopped for a moment and looked about her, but, recognizing no one, she continued her career until she was pulled out from the crowd by a friendly hand. It was that of the woman who had called her name. "Where can you be going, my good soul?" she exclaimed. "You'll get a bullet into you!"

"My sons! take me to my sons!" murmured Joaquina, as, unable to utter another word, she stretched out her hands towards

the place where the firing was loudest.

"Yes, that is what they are for!" shrieked the other woman vehemently. "Oh that they had died at their birth, or that we had never lived to see them grow to manhood!" . . .

Other persons, meanwhile, had come out of the house and surrounded Joaquina, who had sunk upon a heap of stones and was weeping, disconsolately. "Come in here, madam, don't stay out there tempting Providence!" they were saying.

"I cannot rest until I find them!" she groaned. "The bullets that are meant for them first pass through my body!" . . . And following the vehement impulse of her grief, blinding her reason, she tore herself away from the arms that held her.

One of the women had a little fruit shed at the corner of the market-place, closed since the beginning of the outbreak, and she gave the key to Joaquina, advising her to get in there out of danger and to watch to see if she could discover either of her sons. Thither she ran; while the other women wept and lamented over her with

the contagious sympathy of mothers bewailing the misfortunes of another mother.

The little shop was only about twenty steps from one of the barricades which had been erected across the principal street; on the outer side were the troops, and on the inner the citizens and peasants. The door had been forced open, the counter broken, and all its contents overturned or destroyed: almost the only thing intact was an engraving of the Blessed Virgin nailed to the wall. Joaquina fixed her suppliant gaze upon it, imploring the aid of the Mother of Sorrows in this her hour of dire distress; her face now wore that expression of deep grief which—when tears and cries and sobs are exhausted—concentrates itself in the heart, and there corrodes and tortures in silence when restrained by christian resignation; but if impious despair bursts the flood-gates, it overflows like a torrent of burning lava, destroying everything that opposes its path.

The poor woman closed and fastened the door as the firing re-commenced, and looking through a hole saw the combatants

wrapped in a cloud of smoke, crossing and re-crossing like fantastic shadows where the fight was thickest; the noise of the guns and shouts of the men made her tremble as the conflict grew fiercer.

The troops were at last victorious and the barricade was taken; many of the civilians fled, leaving the arms that denoted them as rebels; others stood firm, waiting to resist the soldiers hand to hand. Fainting with fear and horror on hearing the firing come nearer and nearer, Joaquina closed the tiny shutter through which she had been watching the awful scene, and let herself fall helpless to the ground. Presently the sound of firing, the imprecations of the combatants, the groans of the wounded, and even the heavy thud of the bodies as they fell to the ground, were distinctly audible; two bullets one after another pierced the frail door and embedded themselves in the wall opposite.

“Roch!”—suddenly cried the voice of one who seemed to be begging for life.

Joaquina sprung to her feet, pale and rigid as a corpse.

“Roch ! Roch ! . . For God's sake, don't fire !” cried the voice again in greater anguish still.

At the same instant a shot was fired close to the door ; a shriek, the noise of a body falling, and the grating of steel, resounded in the ears of that unhappy mother.

Joaquina tore open wide the door.

Great God ! . . Perico, her beloved and so much lamented son, was lying dead upon the threshold with a dagger in his breast, and a bullet in his heart ! . . . There, standing before him, was Roch ! . . . In his left hand the still smoking gun, and his right wet with his brother's blood. . . .

On perceiving his mother he started back, and his guilty hand left the stain of wet blood upon his forehead.

“Cain ! . . . Cain ! It is written on thy brow !” shrieked Joaquina with the horrible energy of a mother cursing a reprobate son ; with the terrible anguish of a mother who sees before her one son a wounded corpse, and the other a fratricide. . . .

FINIS.

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